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JOHN O'SULLIVAN on Father Neuhaus's Conversions

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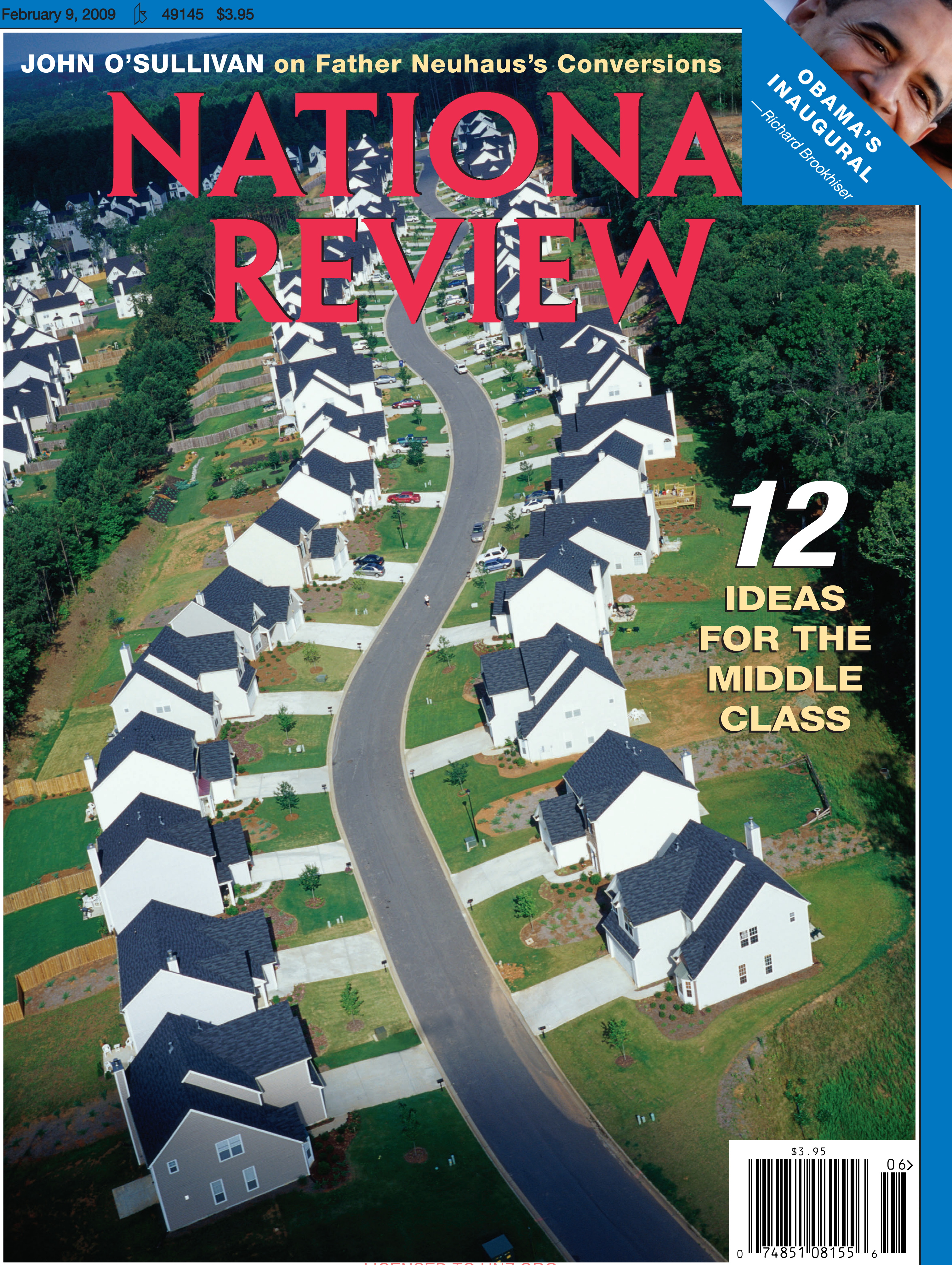

OBAMA'S INAUGURAL
—Richard Brookhiser

12 IDEAS FOR THE MIDDLE CLASS

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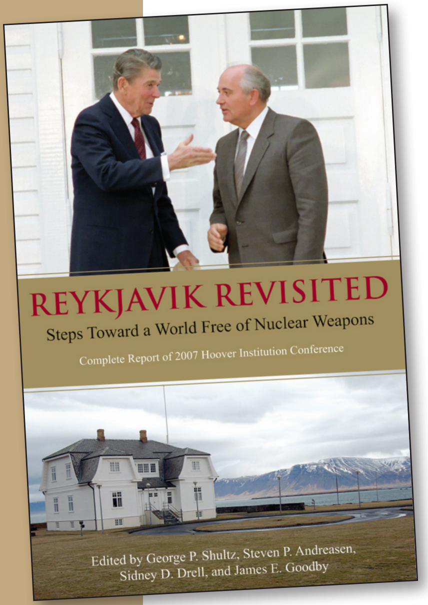
REYKJAVIK REVISITED
Steps Toward a World Free of Nuclear Weapons
Complete Report of 2007 Hoover Institution Conference
Edited by George P. Shultz, Steven P. Andreasen,
Sidney D. Drell, and James E. Goodby

REYKJAVIK REVISITED

Steps Toward a World Free of Nuclear Weapons

Complete Report of 2007 Hoover Institution Conference

Edited by
George P. Shultz, Steven P. Andreasen,
Sidney D. Drell, and James E. Goodby

Drawn from presentations made at the Hoover Institution's October 2007 conference, this collection of essays examines the practical steps necessary to address the current security challenges of nuclear weapons and to move toward the Reykjavik goal of eliminating all nuclear weapons. The distinguished group of contributors includes former officials of the past six administrations, Republican and Democratic, along with senior scholars and scientific experts on nuclear issues.

The topics covered include eliminating short-range nuclear weapons designed to be forward-deployed, securing nuclear stockpiles worldwide, monitoring nuclear warheads, the challenges of verification and compliance, regional animosities and nuclear weapons proliferation, preventing the spread of enrichment and reprocessing, turning the goal of a world without nuclear weapons into a joint enterprise, and other critical issues.

Commentaries by Henry A. Kissinger, Sam Nunn, William J. Perry, and George P. Shultz

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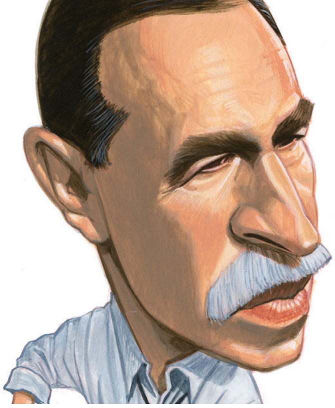

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COVER STORY

Twelve Ideas for The Middle Class

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Conservatives have a battery of free-market-oriented policies to direct at the problems of the middle class. Some have to do with big, traditional issues (the tax burden on families), while others address concerns that have usually been beneath conservative notice (traffic congestion). Our authors present a dozen such ideas.

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Letters

Someone HELP! this Child

I am so sad that *HELP!* is a casualty of your superb new format. My ten-year-old son adores *HELP!*, and it has been a springboard for our discussions of current events for several years.

HELP!!!!

He read the table of contents for your last issue in disbelief, asked "Mom! Where's *HELP!*?" and then determinedly and futilely leafed through the issue page by page before slumping, resigned, at the kitchen table. Pretty dramatic, no? This is a kid who grabs NR out of the mail pile before I even know it's there.

If there is no hope for *HELP!* then alas, we shall have to adapt to Change.

Susan Gibbs de San Martin
Croton-on-Hudson, N.Y.

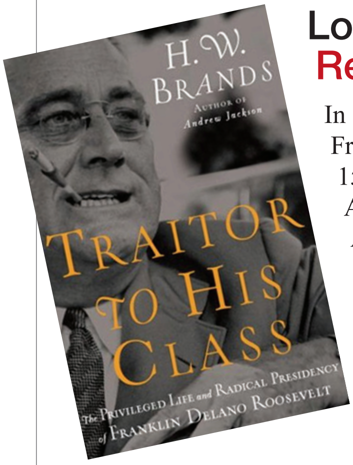
The Editors reply: Can't you just give him Burke instead?

Looking Good

The first thing I noticed about your January 26 issue was the new design. It's very clean and airy. I like it very much. It's a nice platform for the great artwork you often run, but it doesn't detract from your editorial content. I also like the way the section heads and icons break out of the rules. Even a "Burkean" change makes a big difference.

Your staff did a great job. As an old magazine art director myself, I know how hard it is to do a redesign, especially of an established "brand" (sorry, I've had too many marketing guys in my past) like National Review.

Roger Dowd
Goshen, N.Y.


H. W. Brands
Author of Andrew Jackson
Traitor to His Class
The Privileged Life and Radical Presidency of Franklin Delano Roosevelt

Loyal Republicans

In Conrad Black's review of H. W. Brands's book on Franklin D. Roosevelt ("The Old New Deal," December 15), Black states that in the Spanish Civil War "most Americans favored the Spanish Republicans, but most American Roman Catholics . . . supported the Spanish Loyalists."

In fact, Republicans and Loyalists were one and the same; both terms were used for supporters of the left-wing Spanish government. Franco's supporters were called the Nationalists.

M. Lester O'Shea
Walnut Creek, Calif.

Letters may be submitted by e-mail to letters@nationalreview.com.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CLIMATE CHANGE

MARCH 8 - 10, 2009 · NEW YORK CITY

Is the global warming crisis over? Was it ever really a crisis?

Tens of thousands of scientists now say the media and environmental advocacy groups have it all wrong, that global warming is not a crisis. They point to a cooling trend in global temperatures since 2000, past warming and cooling cycles that were not man-made, and new evidence that carbon dioxide is not a very powerful greenhouse gas.

On March 8-10, 2009, the 2009 International Conference on Climate Change will provide a platform for scientists and policy analysts from around the world who question the theory that global warming is a crisis.

For more information about this exciting conference or to register online, please visit www.heartland.org or www.globalwarmingheartland.org, or call 312/377-4000. Audio and video recordings of presentations made at the 2008 International Conference on Climate Change are also available online at both Web sites.

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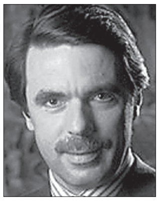
José María Aznar
Former Prime Minister
of Spain

Vaclav Klaus, President
Czech Republic;
President, European Union
(tentative)

Richard S. Lindzen, Ph.D.
One of the world's most
respected atmospheric
physicists

Harrison "Jack"
Schmitt, Ph.D.
Former U.S. Senator
Apollo 17 Moonwalker

Willie Soon, Ph.D.
A physicist at the Harvard-
Smithsonian Center for
Astrophysics

73 CONFERENCE SPEAKERS, INCLUDING:

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Syun Akasofu, Ph.D.
University of Alaska Fairbanks

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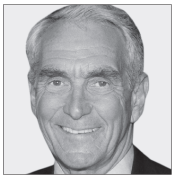
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GLOBAL WARMING
WAS IT EVER REALLY A CRISIS?

More than 34,000 scientists have signed a petition saying global warming probably is natural and not a crisis. See the complete list at www.oism.org/ppetition/.

For more information about global warming, visit www.globalwarmingheartland.org.

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The Week

■ Lincoln, on the other hand, did not have Shakira.

■ There is so much patriotism on the left, anno Obama, that they might now own more flags than Che shirts. Patriotism should not be the sport of partisanship. Obama himself, a careful student of his own life, is mindful of the opportunities he has enjoyed, and we join him and his followers in their gratitude to the country that extended them. Their enthusiasm is our challenge. To win again, we cannot simply wave the flag; we must advance better policies and principles, and make more compelling arguments. We have some of them, and will have to fashion others.

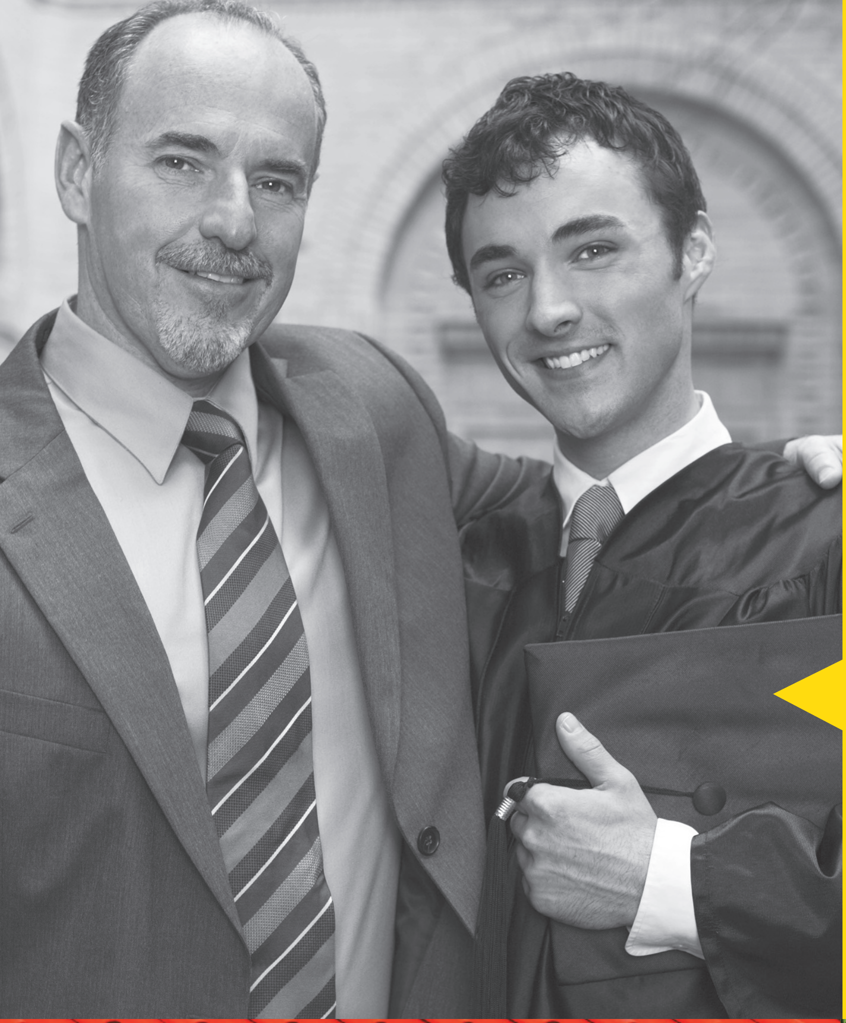
■ Barack Obama wants Timothy Geithner to administer the Treasury. That means, among other things, overseeing the IRS. Byron York's just-the-facts report for National Review Online summarizes why Geithner should be rejected: "What senators learned at the gathering was not only that Geithner had failed to pay self-employment taxes during his time at the International Monetary Fund. They learned that the IMF had repeatedly informed Geithner, as it had all its employees, of his obligation to pay that tax. They learned that Geithner signed documents saying he would pay the tax. And they learned that Geithner accepted IMF reimbursement for Social Security and Medicare taxes that he had not, in fact, paid. . . . In addition to his payment of the unpaid self-employment taxes, Geithner also had to pay $5,566 to cover other shortfalls in his tax payments, for a total of $48,268 in back taxes and interest." An administration with messianic pretensions is vulnerable to the venial. Obama claims to prize competence above all, but the exchequer will not be well served by the elevation of a man with Geithner's cavalier attitude toward financial obligations. On economic issues Obama has access to a deep talent pool. Republicans should encourage him to go fishing for a more credible Treasury secretary.

■ If Eric Holder were a Republican, his nomination to be attorney general, and even more so his confirmation, would be inconceivable. As Clinton's deputy attorney general, he was a central figure in the disgraceful pardon of Marc Rich, one of the FBI's most wanted fugitives, who evaded arrest for racketeering, tax evasion, and trading with the enemy (Iran) for two decades. Currying favor with Rich's lawyer, Jack Quinn, who was well positioned to advance Holder's hope to become attorney general in a Gore administration, Holder tried to pressure prosecutors into negotiating with the fugitive's representatives. When that proved unsuccessful, Holder ran roughshod over his department's protocols and shielded Clinton from prosecutors' strenuous objections to a pardon, which Holder recommended. Moreover, Holder pushed through Clinton's 1999 commutations for several terrorists whose Puerto Rican separatist organizations had carried out over 130 bombings in the United States. Riding the wave of good will toward Obama, Holder will likely be confirmed. He is a terrible choice.

PETA's ocean
(See page 11)

ISMAEL ROLDAN

■ The Obama campaign's anti-war critique of Bush security policy was doctrinaire. The Obama administration—due as much to good fortune as to pragmatism—is signaling more flexibility. Bush's successful troop surge in Iraq paved the way for the gradual reduction of forces that Obama has approved, rather than the hasty pullout he once called for—and he is wisely keeping on Robert Gates, Bush's defense secretary. On Guantanamo Bay, he now acknowledges that the once-promised immediate closure is not possible because the once-promised trials for detainees would be impractical. There are, Obama has discovered, people who mean the United States great harm but cannot be convicted under our rigorous civilian-court standards, so Gitmo must remain open until Congress enacts new rules for detaining enemy combatants. On surveillance, Senator Obama eventually voted for the reforms he derided during the primary campaign; as president, he now stands to benefit from the debunking of the Democrats' "domestic spying" smear against Bush—a specialized federal court having reaffirmed the president's power to



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authorize national-security surveillance without court warrants. Perhaps Democrats will take security more seriously now that they're accountable for it.

■ Left-wingers such as House Judiciary Committee chairman John Conyers demand a special commission to investigate Bush's "crimes." Obama, however, now grasps that such circuses would dent his carefully crafted "unifier" image and have a chilling effect on intelligence officers. So he vaporously talks down investigations while leaving the prosecution door slightly ajar for "blatant" crimes, lest his base revolt. Speaker Pelosi echoes this script. Let's hope the Democrats prove capable of distinguishing between crimes and disagreements with their party's platform.

■ The next secretary of state, Hillary Clinton, told her fellow senators that she was all for "smart power." Right, then—we thought there was something wrong when Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice embraced "stupid power." If smart power means the patient deal, the well-distributed subvention, the compelling message, and the clever feint, then every successful empire uses it. But smart power, in common parlance, is often the nostrum of those leery of exercising plain old power, or force. If that notion gets abroad, not all the smarts in the world will make friends secure or enemies anxious. If Mrs. Clinton believes such talk, she may be one of the weaker members of Obama's team of rivals.

■ The media did not pay much attention to Joe Biden during the 2008 presidential campaign, in part because they were too busy with Sarah Palin: Did she censor books in her local public library? (No.) But Biden has a rich history, including of braggadocio. He has boasted of his IQ, academic standing, and other things (not accurately). And he recently said, "I'm the most experienced vice president since anybody." Oh, really? Take just two recent vice presidents: Cheney and Bush. Cheney had been a presidential chief of staff, a House member, a House leader, a defense secretary, and a CEO. Bush had been a House member, a party chairman, envoy to the U.N., envoy to China, and CIA director. The point is not to run a contest—but rather to say, What is it in Joe Biden that makes him say self-aggrandizing and false things? Bill Clinton once said he was the first president ever to know anything about agriculture. (Several presidents had actually been farmers.) This is a disease for which there is apparently no cure.

■ Some employees are simply irreplaceable. Take Michelle Obama, for example. The University of Chicago Medical Center hired her in 2002 to run "programs for community relations, neighborhood outreach, volunteer recruitment, staff diversity, and minority contracting." In 2005 the hospital raised her salary from $120,000 to $317,000—nearly twice what her husband made as a U.S. senator. Oh, did we mention that he had just become a U.S. senator? He sure had. Requested a $1 million earmark for the UC Medical Center, in fact. Way to network, Michelle! But now that Mrs. Obama has resigned, the hospital says her position will remain unfilled. How can that be, if the work she did was vital enough to be worth $317,000? We can think of only one explanation: Roland Burris's wife wasn't interested.

■ NR argued that, while the Senate may have had the right to reject the appointment of Roland Burris to Barack Obama's vacated seat, it would be unwise to do so, the corruption of the process inhering in the appointer, Governor Blagojevich, not the appointee. There was never any question that the Senate would take our advice—not for our reasons, but out of sheer racial panic. Once a black man was put forward for a seat that another black man had held, even senatorial pride could not stand against him. And even though the former black senator left his seat because the nation gave him another one in the Oval Office, the tableau of black victimhood is still our pietà. Post-racial America: still late for its debut.

■ Democratic Washington is consumed by the alleged need to pass a "stimulus bill" that would keep consumption strong in the short run. When the federal government has attempted such fine-tuning of the economy before, it has most often failed. Congress seems likely to throw money at infrastructure without much regard for bang-for-the-buck, since its object is simply to get money out the door (or, more crassly, to reward key Democratic constituencies). Even if you buy President Obama's numbers, the result would be $275,000 of federal spending for each job saved or created. Meanwhile Obama has given no indication that he will lift a finger to stop tax rates from bouncing up in 2011. We are stumbling toward a milder version of the policy mix of the late 1960s and 1970s: loose money and high taxes. So it is encouraging, if only slightly, to see the Republican Study Committee, a group of conservatives in the House, get behind a package that might actually promote long-term growth. They want to cut taxes on investment—including not only the type of investment that yields capital gains for business, as important as that is, but the investment that middle-class parents make in their children. The RSC is not getting much attention right now, but this is how constructive policy change happens: after the alternatives are tried.

■ The current financial disorder results in no small part from political monkeying with the credit markets. Obama offers as an antidote more political monkeying with the credit markets. He intends to twist the arms of bankers who have accepted bailout funds, insisting that they lend more aggressively than they might otherwise be inclined to do. "We don't want them to sit on any money that they get from taxpayers," says Obama's right hand, David Axelrod. Some people never learn: Overaggressive real-estate lending and excessive risk-taking were the original problems, no? With the government leaning on a damaged banking sector to take on yet more risk, the bailout game has become a trillion-dollar pie-eating contest in which the prize is another pie.

■ A number of erstwhile supporters of the $700 billion Troubled Asset Relief Program have expressed their dissatis-

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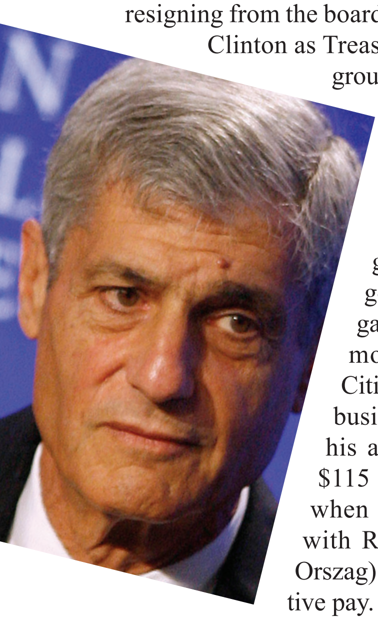
faction with the way the initial $350 billion has been spent. Count us among them. The bailout was hard to swallow in the weeks following the collapse of Lehman Brothers and the subsequent cessation of nearly all commercial lending, but we found persuasive the argument of Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson and Fed chairman Ben Bernanke that an immediate and massive government intervention was needed to stave off a total financial collapse. The passage of the TARP signaled that the U.S. government stood behind the banks, and the acute crisis of confidence appears to have passed. The problem is that somewhere along the way, the TARP became a kind of blank-check authority for the Bush administration, which misused it to bail out the auto companies. This comes close to an unconstitutional delegation of legislative authority to the executive branch, and now that Congress has released the second $350 billion, that concentrated power lies in Obama's hands.

■ Robert Rubin, dean of the Goldman Sachs Democrats, is resigning from the board of Citigroup. Rubin served President Clinton as Treasury secretary and is at the center of a group of influential Democrats who dominated economic policy during the 1990s and who are set to do the same under Obama. Let us hope they provide better returns to the government than Rubin managed at Citigroup, which pocketed a $300 billion government handout after suffering gargantuan losses on ill-advised subprime-mortgage investments. Still bleeding, Citigroup was forced to sell its brokerage business, Smith Barney, to raise cash. For his achievements, Rubin was paid some $115 million—something to keep in mind when the Obama administration, stocked with Rubin acolytes (Geithner, Summers, Orszag) starts prattling about excessive executive pay.



■ On May 9, 2001, President Bush unveiled his first set of nominees to the federal appellate bench. Among them were Barrington Parker and Roger Gregory, both former Clinton appointees. These nominations were a rare gesture of bipartisanship in judicial politics, but instead of reciprocating, Democrats prevented the Senate from even taking an up-or-down vote on many of Bush's judges. Eight years later, President Obama talks a good game about post-partisanship and "transcending" traditional politics. If he wants his deeds to live up to his words, he should renominate Peter Keisler, a co-founder of the Federalist Society, to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit. Other good choices can be found for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, where all of Bush's nominees—Robert Conrad, Rod Rosenstein, Steve Matthews, Glen Conrad—have won praise from both sides of the aisle. As a senator, Obama exhibited a conspicuous lack of bipartisan initiative, voting against confirmation of both John Roberts and Samuel Alito, and even voting to filibuster the latter. Including a few Bush picks among his early nominees would demonstrate Obama's good faith and correct an injustice that has diminished the presidency and our constitutional order.

JASON DECROW/AP

■ Barack Obama went to a dinner with conservative columnists at George Will's house. By all accounts charming and well-informed, Obama wanted to make a gesture toward the civil discourse he talks about so often. Good for him.

■ Democrat Charlie Rangel wants to bring back the draft. His chances of success are only slightly better than they were in 2004, when the House defeated his bill by a vote of 404–2. He is raising the issue in order to disseminate once again the canard that the poor are bearing a disproportionate share of the nation's war-fighting burden. In fact, a 2005 Heritage Foundation study found that the opposite is the case. In 1999, 18 percent of military enlistees came from the poorest quintile of the population. In 2003, that number dropped to 15 percent. By contrast, the percentage of enlistees from the richest quintile rose from 19 percent to 22 percent over the same period. Nor do minorities wind up as cannon fodder on the front lines. Blacks and Hispanics make up 27 percent of the population, but 20 percent of the military dead in Iraq to date. We would send Rangel the statistics, but we're not sure which apartment to mail them to.

■ A law passed in a panic over tainted toys from China now threatens to put thousands of small American vendors out of business. The Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act requires all toys and clothes sold to children in the U.S. to be tested by third parties for lead and other chemicals. This isn't a big problem for large chains like Mattel, but for people like Michael Secore and Cecilia Leibovitz, who make toys and sell them from their home in Vermont, the new regulations are prohibitively expensive. The act is a case study in unintended consequences: Congress aimed for Beijing and hit Montpelier.

■ Should a municipal utility district in Austin have to ask the U.S. attorney general before it moves a polling place across the street? The Voting Rights Act has been interpreted to answer yes. Because Texas was found to engage in discriminatory practices in 1975—by not supplying election materials in Spanish—the whole state is a "covered jurisdiction" that has to get "pre-clearance" from Washington before it changes even the most trivial of its election practices. When Congress reauthorized the Voting Rights Act in 2006, it declared that the rules would stay in effect for another 25 years. Getting out from under the rules is theoretically possible, but the procedure is onerous. The Supreme Court has agreed to consider a constitutional challenge to the law brought by that utility district. Constitutional or not, the law is certainly senseless. Most liberals these days believe that felons should regain the right to vote after serving their time. The covered states have served enough time to regain the right to set their own election procedures.

■ The weather doesn't always cooperate with the plans of human beings, but thankfully, it has agreed to work with the U.S. political timetable. Within a week of Barack Obama's inauguration, climatologist Jim Hansen announced that the U.S. had "only four years left" to save the world from global warming. After that, it would be too late. In his scientific opinion.

■ Events in Gaza have been explaining to the locals that messing with Israel is costly. The lesson is painful, and may well become more painful if it is not properly learned. The surprise is that Israel waited so long to take action against the Islamist extremists of Hamas who proclaim their intention to destroy it. As soon as Hamas took power in Gaza, this test of strength was sure to happen. But this is much more than an issue of Israel versus Palestinians. Willy-nilly, Israel has been caught up in the far larger and more significant dispute between secular Muslims and Islamist extremists, a dispute that has been the cause of much bloodshed ever since the Iranian revolution of 1979. Sponsoring Hezbollah in Lebanon, and Hamas in Gaza, the Iranians have established two Islamist bastions on the Mediterranean. This onward march of Iran prompts Arab regimes to recognize that they have interests in common with Israel. For all their Islamist credentials, the Saudis have at times criticized Hamas openly. The editor of *al-Gumhouriyya*, the Egyptian government daily, has written a series of articles with a title that President Bush himself might have devised: "Hamas, Damascus, Iran—the New Axis of Evil." Israelis, at least, are well aware that it is that axis they are now fighting.

■ For decades now, Jimmy Carter has been a purveyor of PLO propaganda. Indeed, he has been a writer of that propaganda: He ghosted speeches for Arafat (as confirmed by the historian Douglas Brinkley, in an admiring book about Carter). But now

My Fellow Ideologues

'WHAT is required," proclaimed Barack Obama in his pre-inaugural address in Philadelphia, "is a new declaration of independence, not just in our nation, but in our own lives—from ideology and small thinking, prejudice and bigotry—an appeal not to our easy instincts but to our better angels."

What's a poor ideologue like me to make of that?

Now before I go on, I need to clarify something about what I mean when I say I'm an ideologue. It's true, there's a venerable tradition in conservatism that doesn't like ideology. H. Stuart Hughes's famous aphorism "Conservatism is the negation of ideology" earned applause from no less than Russell Kirk. But Kirk was talking about such poisons of the mind as Jacobinism, Bolshevism, fascism. What Barack Obama seems to have in mind is nothing more than *disagreement*.

Remember his famous comment that small-town folks bitterly cling to their sky god and boom sticks because of the lack of jobs (and of the progressive economic policies that would supposedly create them)? The press usually downplayed the rest of the quote. He went on to say that the same people might also cling to "antipathy to people who aren't like them or anti-immigrant sentiment or anti-trade sentiment as a way to explain their frustrations."

Now whatever your positions on trade or immigration, it's hard to see why they should be chalked up to bitterness and bigotry simply because they differ from President Obama's.

As a matter of political strategy, Obama is trying to preempt any criticism by casting it as intellectually illegitimate. For instance, at a much-discussed press conference on the economy, then-President-elect Obama cast himself as an open-minded pragmatist. He said that he's receptive to new ideas no matter the source, Republican, Democrat, conservative, liberal. But he also insisted that the one thing we all know is: "Only government" can fix the mess we're in.

Some of this is conventional politics, particularly Democratic politics. All presidents like to claim they represent the reasonable center, and cast their opponents as sectarian, or worse. Franklin Roosevelt was a champion of this sort of thing, describing his critics as puppets of the plutocracy. Harry Truman accused Thomas Dewey of being a patsy for a Hitlerite cabal. LBJ said that Goldwater was an apostle of "hate." Richard Nixon claimed to speak for the silent majority, not the damned hippies. Bill Clinton linked his critics to the Oklahoma City bombers. In many respects, Obama's rhetoric is more respectful and inclusive than that of his predecessors.

But one senses in Obama that he also believes this stuff at, dare I say it, an ideological level. And that's the point. The "end of ideology" has always been an ideological siren song for planners, an intellectual utopia for liberals desperate to cut short inconvenient debates. Its tune is a prelude to the chorus that pines for a "New Politics" and even "New Men." It assumes that people like Obama know all they need to know about how to run a country and now it's just a matter of logistics and organization; that, as John F. Kennedy put it, "most of the problems . . . that we now face, are technical problems, are administrative problems." Or, as Michael Dukakis put it in 1988, the issue is competence, not ideology.

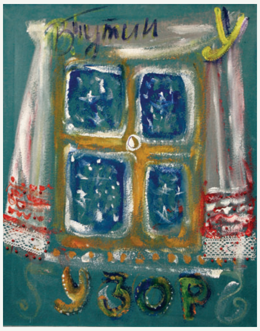
The quest for a post-ideological world is not only fool's gold; it bespeaks a mindset that is ultimately inimical to the spirit of democracy. The desire for an end to ideology is really the desire for total victory over your opponents. There will always be ideological disagreement because people's values, aims, and principles will always differ. And if saying so marks me an ideologue, so be it.

—JONAH GOLDBERG

Carter has become a purveyor of *Hamas* propaganda, which is arguably a step farther. In an op-ed for the *Washington Post*, he said that "Israel launched an attack in Gaza to destroy a defensive tunnel being dug by Hamas inside the wall that encloses Gaza." A defensive tunnel. Some in Israel pronounced themselves shocked. We might well imagine that some in Hamas were shocked, too: that a former American president—and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize—should adopt and spread their flimsiest and most brazen lies.

■ People in Arab countries and even Iran have participated only on a very limited scale in demonstrations against Israeli action in Gaza. Palestinians in Jordan and Israel, and on the West Bank, seem to recognize that Hamas is ruining their national cause, and they stay at home. Not so in Europe. Inciting and exaggerating, the media are urging Hamas supporters to be plain Jew-haters. The BBC and the liberal papers smear Israel steadily. Some sort of prize must go to the French state-owned TV network France-2, which put out a film of dead Palestinians, supposedly recent victims of an Israeli air raid. In fact these people had been killed four years ago when Hamas itself accidentally exploded a truck in Gaza. Synagogues have been fire-bombed in Brussels, London, Toulouse, and Helsingborg in Sweden. Jews have been assaulted in Denmark, Britain, and France. The British police are warning Jews to review security procedures, and apparently Islamist extremists have a hit list of prominent Jews to attack. In Amsterdam, there has been a crowd chanting "Hamas, Hamas! Jews to the gas!" Apparently incapable of fulfillment, the Palestinian cause instead has brought the past back with a vengeance.

■ Hitler and Churchill were both competent painters, though both showed a marked aversion to the human form, preferring still lifes and landscapes. Here comes a new national leader eager to fill a canvas: Vladimir Putin, prime minister (and president "behind the curtain") of Russia. At a charity auction in St. Petersburg, a painting by Putin fetched over $1 million. Putin's subject was a starry, snowy night sky, seen through the window of a traditional peasant's hut. "With remarkable economy," observed a British art critic, "he contrasts the warmth, light, and gaiety of the interior with the cold and darkness beyond." Just two days after the celebrity-art auction, human-rights journalist Stanislav Markelov was shot dead in a Moscow street by persons unknown, after having made a mighty nuisance of himself to the Russian authorities. A female journalist with Mr. Markelov was also killed—the 15th journalist to be murdered by unknown strangers since Putin took power. The prime minister's artistic inspirations notwithstanding, the Markelov killing fortifies the suspicion that, in Mr. Putin's case, the place of cold and darkness may be located within.



DMITRY LOVETSKY/AP

■ Russia exports huge quantities of natural gas through pipelines in Ukraine and then onward to many countries in Europe. In the depth of a cold winter, the Kremlin decided to cut supplies. This brutal step has led to deaths, factory closures, loss of productivity, and a general dismay about Russian intentions. Ostensibly, technicalities about pricing and transit fees were the cause of the spat. On top of that, the Ukrainian currency has more or less collapsed and the International Monetary Fund is in the process of doing the customary bailout. At the end of a miserable fortnight, the two countries signed an agreement to restore gas to the shivering customers. In reality, the Russia of Vladimir Putin was demonstrating that it holds the whip hand over Ukraine, and could even bring it to its knees. The huge Ukrainian network of pipes earns $3 billion annually, and Russia, in its refreshed dreams of empire, aims to get control of this.

■ The Chinese government has announced that March 28 will henceforth be celebrated as Serf Liberation Day in Tibet, commemorating the day in 1959 when China took full control of Tibet, sweeping away the evils of the old clerico-feudal order and bringing all the blessings of Communism and Mao Tse-tung Thought to the long-suffering Tibetan peasantry. Not all those old evils were invented by Chinese propagandists. But it has been the common opinion of mankind down the ages that native rulers, whatever abuses they might inflict, are to be preferred to foreign occupiers, whatever benefits they might bring (and the Chinese have brought precious few). The Greek poet in Byron's *Don Juan*, living under Turkish rule around 1790, looks back wistfully to a predecessor in the golden age of 500 B.C.: "He served—but served Polycrates— / A tyrant; but our masters then / Were still, at least, our countrymen . . ." Tibetans have lived for half a century under masters who are not their countrymen. They are second-class citizens in a nation once their own, their culture marked for extinction. Serf Liberation Day will not assuage the injustice of that.

■ The Associated Press tells us: "A court in central China has sentenced a woman to death for hiring someone to strangle her 9-year-old son so she could have another child with her new husband without violating population laws. . . . Li initially received a death sentence suspended for two years because she had suffered from depression after having two abortions due to the rules against her bearing another child. . . . Such sentences are often commuted to life in prison. But the higher court found that her depression was not directly related to her crime." There is no excuse for this woman's murder of her child. But she lives in a sensationally brutal society.

■ In France, Pres. Nicolas Sarkozy proposed some school reforms. This did not go down well with teachers, some of whom let their feelings be known when Sarkozy arrived in Saint-Lô for a speech. As the Associated Press put it, they "hurled shoes and other objects at police," who then had to respond with tear gas. The teachers hurled shoes? Oh, yes. Where in the world did they get that idea? And is that not exactly the kind of teacher you would want to educate *your* child: one who threw shoes at police?

■ Recent reports indicate that 40 al-Qaeda members have died of the plague. On one level, it's great news when Mother

Nature does our job for us. On another, it is a sobering reminder—like the fact that Gitmo detainees' health tends to improve—of the sheer primitiveness of our enemies' lives.

■ G. K. Chesterton thought Rudyard Kipling, for all his bellicosity, best understood the arts of peace: the work of the administrator and the engineer that keeps the world going, and that is often heroic because life and death depend on its successful execution. Kipling himself could not have made this point more clearly than did the events of a recent day in the life of Chesley Sullenberger III, US Airways pilot. At the start of a routine flight from New York City to Charlotte, N.C., an act of nature intervened: Canada geese collided with the engines. Air-traffic control told Sullenberger to head for Teterboro airport in northern New Jersey. Calculating that he would not make it, he decided to land in the Hudson River instead. He brought his tons of aircraft down as smoothly as may be, and, when the plane began to fill with water, walked up and down the aisle to make sure that every passenger had gotten off safely (they had). Well done, sir. Well done indeed.

■ Andrew Roberts, the British historian, was rung up by an "American lady" who wanted him to appear on her radio program. (The term "American lady" is his.) She was setting up a debate: Was George W. Bush the worst president in American history, or only the worst president in modern American history? Which side was Mr. Roberts inclined to take? The historian responded that he regarded Bush as a good president—which seemed to "dumbfound" the lady, and "wreck my chances of appearing on her show." We should say. A nice illustration of the media and George W. Bush, at the end of his two terms.

■ The movie *Notorious*, a life of the rapper known as the Notorious B.I.G., opened to some acclaim—also one shooting and four stabbings, at last count. As the poet said, "You're nobody 'til somebody kills you."

■ PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) has opened a campaign against fishing—or, in animal-rights Newspeak, against "the hunting of sea kittens." By rebranding our piscine pals "sea kittens," you see, the PETA people hope to make the killing and eating of them unacceptable. As their website asks: "Who could possibly want to put a hook through a sea kitten?" Why, anyone who enjoys a well-prepared *sole meunière*, surely. And where will this lunacy stop? Consider, for example, Canada geese, whose waste products are rapidly making America's parks uninhabitable, and one flock of which brought down that plane. Should we refer to these loathsome fowl as "sky bunnies"?

■ Jim Boulet Jr. was a hero of the culture wars: As executive director of English First for more than two decades, he defended our common language against the relentless assaults of multiculturalism. He battled bilingual education, foreign-language ballots, and Puerto Rican statehood—always with a good cheer that his allies did their best to share. He was a prayerful and generous man, known among his friends for gift-giving and other acts of kindness. On January 16, at the age of 50, cancer took him. R.I.P.

■ It's always something stupid that people remember you for. Ricardo Montalban appeared in hundreds of movies and television shows in a career that began before Pearl Harbor, yet to members of the age cohort that is now running America, he is best remembered for extolling the Chrysler Cordoba's "soft Corinthian leather." Here at NATIONAL REVIEW, Montalban made a deeper impression—as a longtime subscriber, a thoughtful conservative, and a friend of the magazine. Our publisher, Jack Fowler, recalls a National Review Institute dinner "where, nobly perturbed, he stood up and hushed the chattering crowd because Bill Bennett was speaking. Just the hint of the wrath of Khan was enough to bring instant silence." Cheesy commercials aside, Ricardo Montalban will be remembered as a perfect gentleman, courtly and patient with fans and strangers alike; as a devout Catholic; and as one of a tiny handful of performers who, when the situation required it, could actually out-overact William Shatner. Dead at 88. R.I.P.

POLITICS

The New Old Thing

PRESIDENT OBAMA'S task in his inaugural address was to unify the country behind his leadership, so he did not give a partisan speech. He made several nods to post-partisanship, as when he pledged to get past "stale political arguments" and "worn-out dogmas"—pledges that both of his predecessors also made.

But Obama does not consider the dogmas of liberalism worn out, as his speech made clear. From the financial crisis he draws

JAE C. HONG/AP

the lesson that "the market can spin out of control" when it is not kept under the "watchful eye" of government. One need not deny that government has a vital regulatory role to recognize ideology masquerading as thought.

The new president is also a man enthralled by his own novelty: We are to start taking care of our poor, and the poor of the world, and respecting our constitutional ideals. He matches contemporary liberalism's self-regard with his own.

His congressional majorities are strong, but his ambition will tax them. He is placing a large and expensive bet on a stimulus plan that seems highly unlikely to work as advertised: Even Washington may not be capable of spending money quite as quickly as Obama wants. Then, having put the economy back on track toward growth, he intends to tackle climate change by limiting carbon emissions and to further federalize health care. At some point he says he will also tackle the insolvency of our entitlement programs. These vast tasks conflict with one another, and not only in terms of time management; and Obama's history of leading a large organization begins and ends with his presidential campaign.

Nor does this list exhaust Obama's goals. He also wants to defeat our enemies and keep us safe, to retain the applause of the world, to raise taxes, to win reelection, to appoint liberal judges, and to strengthen our alliances. Conservatives should hope that he succeeds in some respects and fails in others.

OBITUARY

Fr. Richard John Neuhaus, R.I.P.

Richard John Neuhaus, who died on January 8, was the most influential Catholic and Christian theologian and writer in America during the second half of the 20th century. His influence can be compared to that of Archbishop Fulton Sheen, with one important distinction: Fulton Sheen exercised his sway over the public directly, through his radio and television sermons. Father Neuhaus did so less directly, through his books and articles, through his editorship of a very important magazine devoted to religion and politics, through his friendship with Pope John Paul II, and through his impact on other theologians both in the Catholic church and in other Christian congregations. Partly for those reasons, however, Neuhaus's influence is likely to be the deeper, longer-lasting, and more extensive one.

> Without Richard John Neuhaus, Christian conservatives would have been politically much weaker and intellectually far less formidable.

Neuhaus began his adult life as a Canadian, a left-winger, and a Lutheran. He never lost his love for his country of birth—he spent six weeks of every year vacationing, reading, and reflecting in the Quebec countryside—his respect for a liberalism shaped by charity, or his admiration for the Lutheran tradition. He became nonetheless an American, a conservative, and a Catholic. And from these three conversions he forged for himself a distinctive religious identity that was conservative and generous, traditional and open, charitable and—yes—combative.

Neuhaus was a superb, natural controversialist. In the magazine he founded and edited, *First Things*, he commented on the overlapping topics of religion, culture, and politics in long, thoughtful articles and short, brilliant squibs. His wit was a vehicle for important truths, and some of his epigrams have entered the language.

Thus: For the *New York Times*, "the only good Catholic is a bad Catholic."

Or: "Whenever orthodoxy becomes optional, it will sooner or later be proscribed."

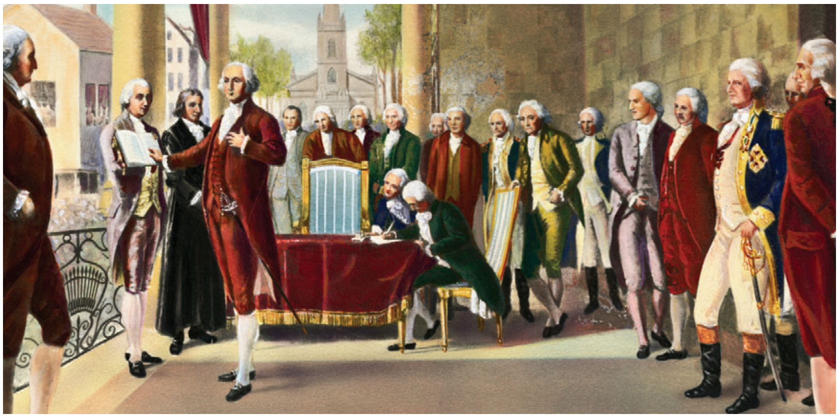
Neuhaus never shrank from what he considered a necessary fight—even one with friends—when the issue was important enough. He abandoned his original allies on the left over *Roe v. Wade*. He later devoted a special issue of *First Things* to an attack on judicial supremacy that questioned whether an American political regime that tolerated mass abortions was a legitimate one. That formulation divided the Right and led to the Left's invention of the term "theocons" to demonize him and the Christian conservatives. To the end of his life Neuhaus continued to fight passionately for the thousands of innocents we kill annually.

But fighting and controversy, though necessary to the propagation of religious truth in our age, were secondary themes in Neuhaus's life. His achievements were essentially creative. He was a natural organizer who did not stop at reshaping his own religious identity. Along with Michael Novak, George Weigel, and others, he established *First Things* and made it the focus for an intellectually respectable resistance to the theological liberalism of the 1960s in Judaism and all Christian denominations. That achieved, he worked successfully to bring together Catholics and evangelicals—traditionally not the friendliest of fellow-Christians—in a new, unified political constituency for the life issues and other concerns of traditional believers. He reshaped that old-time religion.

Without Richard John Neuhaus, Christian conservatives would have been politically much weaker and intellectually far less formidable.

Much more could be written about his influence on Christianity in America and worldwide. But we at National Review also knew Richard as a valued colleague—our religion editor for many years—and a dear friend. Most of us have enjoyed dinners with him that would begin with a strong Beefeater martini and end with equally strong draughts of laughter. Some of us sought his pastoral advice and benefited from his wisdom. That he was just a few streets away in New York was itself a source of consolation.

We feel sorrow at his passing, but mainly for ourselves. He has gone to the Savior he served so well and faithfully. R.I.P.



A Rhapsode and a Question Mark

The Obama inauguration, placed in history

BY RICHARD BROOKHISER

Fussy rituals, ubiquitous kitsch, Aretha Franklin doing her thing, Rick Warren doing his thing, the weather (cold enough to be challenging, not inclement enough to be painful), but above all the crowds: Deduct what you will for partisan fervor, racial pride, and media tub-thumping, the inauguration of Barack Obama was still an impressive piece of popular theater, less for the spectacle that was put on than for the performance the audience gave by showing up.

One small but essential part was played by the outgoing Bushes. Departing presidents do not always play so well with others: Both Adamses, John and John Quincy, were so outraged by providence's rebuke to them (and to the nation that had betrayed them by voting for someone else) that they did not even attend the inaugurations of their successors, Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson respectively. The Bushes were a class act. George W. Bush was also palpably relieved to be handing off to someone else.

Most of our inaugurations and inaugural addresses have been forgettable. It is the glory of our system that they can be. Still we have had our share of drama.

For sheer euphoria, nothing, not even 2009, tops Washington's first inauguration, in 1789. His trip, from Mount Vernon to New York City, then the capital, was a triumphal progress through six of the thirteen states. Twenty-five thousand people cheered him in Philadelphia, out of a population of 28,000. Rep. Fisher Ames, one of the rising orators of the age, judged the inaugural address with a pro's eye and ear. Washington, he wrote, was "actually shaking," and his voice was "so low as to call for close attention." But these shortcomings only added to the drama of the occasion.

Disaster made other inaugurations dramatic. On the day of Abraham Lincoln's first inauguration, in 1861, Winfield Scott, the old Mexican War hero who was lieutenant general of the Army, posted himself in a small carriage on a side street, in full uniform, ready for any emergency. What Scott feared was assassination, followed by riot and panic. Two weeks before Franklin Roosevelt's first inauguration, in 1933, he narrowly missed being shot by an anarchist in Miami Beach. The bullets instead killed Chicago mayor Anton Cermak, who had followed Roosevelt to Florida to get right with the president-elect (Cermak had not endorsed him early enough at the 1932 convention). Even without the whiff of murder, these inaugurations were made grim enough, thanks to political and economic chaos.

Incoming presidents like to advertise themselves as avatars of change. If they are only the next figure to pop out of a clock, what is the glory in that? Sometimes the new president can make good on that claim. Thomas Jefferson came into office in 1801 promising to undo the legacy of America's first majority party, the Federalists of Washington and John Adams; though he spoke emollient words in his inaugural—"We are all republicans, we are all federalists"—in private he vowed "to sink federalism into an abyss from which there shall be no resurrection." For public consumption, he proposed to cut taxes, honor states' rights, and demilitarize, defending the nation with gunboats instead of frigates.

Lincoln was elected on a platform of containing the slave power—no more slavery in the territories, and no expansion into Central America or the Caribbean in order to acquire new slave territories. He iterated it in the interval between his election and his inauguration. "On the territorial question," he wrote in February 1861, "I am inflexible." His containment policy was so offensive to southerners that seven states seceded before he was sworn in; four more followed them once it was clear that the new president meant what he said.

Ronald Reagan came into office in 1981 as half a Jefferson, promising to cut taxes. But he was also half a Washington, determined to end a decade of foreign-policy disasters, from losing the Vietnam War to losing the American embassy in Tehran. He explained his new Cold War policy to one of his inner circle, William P. Clark, thus: We win, they lose.

But other new presidents have seemed like new departures not because of what they offered to do, but because of who they were. Their agendas were nebulous; their persons were revolutionary. When Andrew Jackson won his rematch with John Quincy Adams in 1828, Jacksonian democracy was not yet even a name, much less a program. Jackson seemed fresh because he was the first president who was neither a Virginian nor an Adams; he had been a boy during the Revolution, not a founder or the son of a founder; he had been born on the frontier and fought on it; he had never gone to college ("a barbarian" who "hardly could spell his own name," was how John Quincy Adams put it). Some feared the advent of such a figure—Justice Joseph Story foresaw "the reign of King Mob"—and others welcomed him. But everyone expected something new.

Franklin Roosevelt took office with

BETTMANN/CORBIS

some of the same ambiguity. Like Jackson, he knew he wanted the job, and he believed that his predecessor had done badly—no one, looking at the unemployment figures, would dispute that—but his program was not at all clear. “If we have to change our minds twice every day,” he told one crony, “we should do it.” What was clear was that he seemed very different from the man he replaced. Herbert Hoover was a typical figure of the decay of a political dynasty: a smart insider who had risen on the coattails of two politicians, Warren Harding and Calvin Coolidge. Roosevelt, by contrast, was to the manor, and the manner, born. He had the confidence of a two-term governor and of eighth-generation gentry, plus that million-dollar smile.

Some new presidents, finally, bask in hype. John F. Kennedy’s inauguration was historic—a little: He was the youngest elected president, and he was the first Roman Catholic. But these, and every other quality of his, were amplified by a besotted media. Theodore H. White was a decent, honorable reporter, but he fell for Kennedy as hard as any other journalist, even while trying to analyze the phenomenon: Kennedy, he wrote in *The Making of the President 1960*, “is a Pulitzer Prize winner himself, and a one-time reporter; he has an enormous respect for those who work with words and those who write clean prose. He likes newspapermen and likes their company.” One would like to barf.

Where does Obama fall in this range of new and would-be new presidents? Somewhere with Jackson, FDR, and JFK. His campaign was as vague as it was uplifting; his most hard-edged issue, his opposition to the war in Iraq, helped him win the enthusiasm of the netroots and early momentum in his upset of Hillary Clinton, but it faded as the surge succeeded. Obama is historic because of who he is, and what we say about him.

Obama will be the fifth-youngest new president. He is also one of the least experienced—Ulysses Grant, who was fourth-youngest, had won the Civil War—but coming after George W. Bush, whose eight years have seemed like 80, a little ignorance feels like bliss. Obama’s life story is unique in the annals of the presidency. His absent foreign father, his peripatetic mother, his time in Indonesia, and his pilgrimage to Kenya is as odd as a non-immigrant’s life can be. It recalls some of the comets of American history, Alexander Hamilton or Henry Kissinger. We have put a V. S. Naipaul character in the White House. His supporters believe this will make us popular abroad. I suspect that we have elected an unusually proud and self-directed character; if the displaced survive and thrive, those are the qualities that enable them to do it. Reporters admire Obama for at least one of the reasons they admired John Kennedy: He is a fellow verbalist. Without being a Jefferson or a Lincoln, he is the best writer to reach the presidency since Theodore Roosevelt.

Last (and first) comes race. In the Obama administration, trying to talk or think about race will be like standing in a hurricane on top of Mt. Washington. We should only remember that there are some good reasons why this should be so. We had a long way to come to this moment, and we should feel proud that we arrived. On one hand, Martin Luther King Jr. was shot 41 years ago; on the other, we have put a Luo in the presidency before Kenya.

Obama’s inaugural remarks were not a State of the Union address, but he put himself on record calling for government action, and a mobilization (led by him) of our idealistic impulses. “The time has come to set aside childish things. . . . We must pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and begin again the work of remaking America. . . . The spirit of service . . . must inhabit us all. . . . What is required of us now is a new era of responsibility.” Buckle up, the president intends to ride the credit crunch to the Newest Deal.

He also acknowledged the world, announcing that “we are ready to lead once more.” But what about those who do not desire our leadership? To the worst of them, he said: “Our spirit is stronger” and “We will defeat you.” He will be given the opportunity to make good on those pledges.

The Greeks had a character called the rhapsode: a professional reciter of their greatest poetry, particularly Homer. Plato mocks rhapsodes in his dialogues, partly because he envies Homer, who was a better writer than he was. But he also maneuvers his rhapsodes into showing their essential shallowness: One declares that, since he tells of the *Iliad*’s battles, he must therefore be a great general.

Barack Obama is not just a rhapsode. He is a cunning politician. We will see what more he is over the next four, maybe eight, years. **NR**

Federal Roadblocks

A saner regulatory regime would help us update our transportation infrastructure

BY ROBERT VERBRUGGEN

As part of his stimulus plan—which in total adds up to nearly $1 trillion—President Obama has proposed investing $85 billion in the nation’s infrastructure.

Many have asked: Why not spend more in this area? U.S. infrastructure is under severe stress, with highways congested and roads and bridges in need of repair, and Obama’s planned investments will hardly make a dent in the problem. The U.S. will need to spend $225 billion annually for a half century to “upgrade our existing transportation network . . . [and build] more advanced facilities,” according to the government’s National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission.

One likely reason for Obama’s modest goal: regulation. The theory behind the stimulus is that *immediately* pumping money into the economy can pull the country out of a recession—and by the time many projects jump their various regulatory hurdles, it will be too late. To the degree these hurdles are necessary, the delays they cause are acceptable. But many of the regulations burdening construction projects give no apparent benefit.

The biggest culprit is the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), enacted in 1970. The act seems sensible enough: It doesn’t even prohibit anything. It just states that for all federally funded projects, builders must explain how the construction could harm the environment, whether there are less harmful alternatives, and what the builders plan to do to mitigate the harm. They must also allow the public to comment.

Thousands of times each year, this process takes the form of an “Environmental Assessment” document, and hundreds of times, the more detailed “Environmental Impact Statement” is needed. EAs add about 1.4 percent to a project’s construction costs, and EISs add about 2.3 percent, according to a study by the National Cooperative Highway Research Program. When a project falls under a "categorical exclusion"—that is, it's a common type of project known to have no serious environmental impact, so no review is necessary—obtaining the exclusion adds only about 1.1 percent.

NEPA isn't always such a mild nuisance, however. In 1989's *Robertson* v. *Methow Valley Citizens Council*, the Supreme Court confirmed that the law is "procedural" rather than "substantive," mandating only that those executing federal projects document potential environmental harm. But this leaves a window open for abuse, and gives builders a big reason to worry—if an activist group can point to some flaw, real or imagined, in a builder's NEPA process, it can file a lawsuit and tie up construction.

In 2005, A. Kathleen Craft of Nevada's Frehner Construction testified about such lawsuits before the House Committee on Resources (on behalf of the American Road and Transportation Builders Association, or ARTBA, a construction-industry interest group). At the time, the committee was considering various changes to NEPA.

Craft's company had obtained a final Environmental Impact Statement and begun widening U.S. 95 (outside Las Vegas) in 1999, but in 2004, a Sierra Club lawsuit halted the process. The Sierra Club alleged that car exhaust from the highway would hurt those living nearby. Craft suggested a time limit for complaints, and a requirement that complaints deal only with issues raised during the public-comment period. A subsequent law has put a 180-day deadline in place for activists to challenge approvals, but they still aren't required to limit their suits to issues that actually came up during the NEPA-required debate time. They're free to keep silent about their grievances until after the final impact statement, and then complain that the statement doesn't address their problems.

To be fair, the committee's report concluded that fewer than 1 percent of NEPA decisions produced lawsuits, and that in 93 percent of those lawsuits, judges didn't issue injunctions. But the mere *threat* of a lawsuit is enough to scare potential builders into bulletproofing their plans. In 2000, the average Environmental Impact Statement was 742 pages long—too long for most citizens to read, defeating the purpose of public comment, and not a good use of anyone's time.

And of course, NEPA itself is only part of the story. Projects that receive federal funding must first go through a state planning process. Then, during the NEPA process, the builders must explain how they plan to follow other regulations. "If you touch a body of water, which is pretty broadly defined, you have to get a Clean Water Act permit. If you have endangered species, you have to deal with that. If you're disrupting a historic property, there's a whole other regime for that," says Tyler Duvall, who was acting undersecretary for policy in the Department of Transportation in the Bush administration. "NEPA is kind of an umbrella for all of those."

The Endangered Species Act in particular can be a problem. Sometimes it halts construction that might harm specific types of wildlife, but more often it's the ESA *process* that presents an unnecessary burden. Until Bush changed the policy last month, federal agencies couldn't review projects themselves, but had to turn to the federal wildlife agencies, even when there was clearly no threat to any endangered species—a requirement Obama hopes to restore.

Not to mention that private environmental groups like to sue under the ESA. In December of 2008, the Center for Biological Diversity teamed up with Greenpeace and the Defenders of Wildlife to contest Bush's aforementioned change to agency-review procedures. Earlier, it had filed suit against the Department of the Interior concerning 55 species in 28 states, spread over 8.7 million acres whose protection had been removed.

Also, states have their own environmental laws. California often leads in this regard, and currently, strict emissions regulations there have made it difficult for the construction industry to use equipment and heavy machinery. In addition, local governments need to approve projects.

Funding creates still more delays, as every money source can bring with it regulatory baggage. "Federal investment is about 45 percent of transportation investment nationwide," says Jeffrey L. Solsby, director of public affairs for ARTBA, the construction industry group. "The rest comes from state and local sources, and many governments fund projects on a multi-year basis."

Thanks to NEPA and other federal regulations, many states forgo federal funding on some projects to avoid delays and other costs, according to a December 2008 report by the Government Accountability Office. In addition to complying with NEPA, projects that receive federal money must pay workers the "prevailing wage" under the Davis-Bacon Act, hire minority contractors under the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise program, and buy only American steel under the Buy America program. By the GAO's count, 39 state departments of transportation have used only non-federal money on projects that were eligible for federal programs, and 33 of them had done so because of NEPA.

For transportation projects that receive federal funding, it takes a long time to wade through all this red tape. Environmental Assessments and Environmental Impact Statements do a lot of the damage: Between 2003 and 2008, the median EA completion time fluctuated between about 20 and 30 months; the median EIS time between 50 and 70. Even if the Federal Highway Administration hit its stated targets, the median EA would take a year, the median EIS three. There is absolutely no way to stimulate the economy with new projects requiring these assessments.

All told, major highway projects take an average of 13 years, start to finish, according to the Federal Highway Administration. This doesn't have to be the case: After the I-35W bridge in Minnesota collapsed, it took about a year to rebuild, thanks to a categorical exclusion from NEPA requirements (which itself was rushed through, taking only three weeks instead of the normal three to six months). Of course, it takes time to investigate and approve new projects, as opposed to rebuilding, so not all projects can or should qualify for such exclusions. But the current delay for Environmental Assessments and Environmental Impact Statements is "simply too long," as the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission has stated.

President Obama, not to mention state and local governments, could build a lot more a lot faster under a saner regulatory regime. Once he spends his trillion dollars, he might think about establishing one. **NR**

Captain Extraordinary

Ivan Castro of the U.S. Special Forces

BY JAY NORDLINGER

Fort Bragg, N.C.

CAPT. IVAN CASTRO will tell you he's an ordinary man, basically. You may wish to disagree. He is an officer in the U.S. Special Forces, and blind. He was blinded while fighting in Iraq about two and a half years ago. He did not then leave the military. He persevered, to an astonishing degree. He has attracted interest all over the country, as well he might.

He was born in Hoboken, N.J. (same as Frank Sinatra), in 1967. His parents were from Puerto Rico. His dad was a cook and other things, and his mother was a factory worker and other things. How he got that interesting name, "Ivan Castro," he doesn't know. His sister's name is Olga! The family moved to Puerto Rico when he was twelve.

He wanted to be a policeman, a fireman, a soldier—"something with action," as he says. He went to a military high school, and joined the Army when he was 20. He expected to stay for four years. He fought in the Gulf War—and continued in the military. "I had done so much in those four years," he says, "it just didn't make any sense for me to get out."

After the Gulf War, he was in Bosnia, Colombia, and other places. And then he was back in combat, this time in Afghanistan. He was a platoon leader in the 82nd Airborne. In due course, he was in Iraq. It was in September 2006 that the mortar blast came. His injuries were extensive: his right eye gone, his left eye beyond repair, his lungs collapsed, etc. There is a long list of injuries and problems. "Believe it or not," he says, "we keep discovering things that are coming up—injuries we weren't aware of."

I have come to see him in his office at Fort Bragg. He is a personable, gregarious man, the kind who puts people at ease. There is also about him the air of command. He's the kind of soldier about whom people say, "Officer material." A white cane leans against the wall. On another wall is a picture of Captain Castro and his wife with President Bush. There is also a letter from Bush.

And Captain Castro has a specially equipped computer—one that reads him his e-mail, for example. He'll tell you, "I used to hunt and peck. But when you're blind, you can't do that. So I had to learn to type."

When that mortar round went off, "I was fighting to stay alive, fighting not to give up. That's all I remember. I knew I didn't want to die. I knew I wanted to come back to my wife and son." He was unconscious for six weeks. Then he woke up and began his recovery. His wife and mother-in-law never left his bedside.

After his surgeries and rehabilitation, the 82nd was "going to send me to the Warrior Transition Battalion"—that would ease the transition out of the military and into some other kind of life. He would begin life as a disabled vet. "But that was not my intent. My intent was to stay in the Army, to continue my service. I had been doing it for more than 18 years. Why should I give it up now?" (Others might have thought of reasons.)

He told Special Operations that "I wanted to serve as long as they gave me the opportunity, and I wanted to be productive. I didn't want to be sitting down licking envelopes and shredding paper." They agreed. His group commander said, "I'm going to treat you like everyone else, like every other captain here. And I'm going to expect a lot out of you"—which is what this captain wanted.

Why did he not simply give up, and slink away? "My mother, my dad: They were really hard workers. My mother was a survivor. They divorced when I was five, and she worked really hard for everything she had—and she taught me to work hard as well." Castro worked a lot as a kid, and "I was the man of the house. When something broke, I had to fix it. Had to figure it out." His military training made him tough, too: Ranger School, the Special Forces Qualification Course. Those are not cakewalks.

Also, he feels he has an example to set: for his peers, for the soldiers who were under his command. About those soldiers, he says, "They kind of look up to me. I can't let them down." There is the public to consider, too: "When I don my beret, and go out with my cane, people stop and stare." He can feel it. And "if you're a Special Forces Ranger, everyone expects more from you. You're never cold, you're never hungry, you're never tired."

Plus, "I got a son who's 15. I got bills to pay. I'm a husband. Just because I'm blind or injured doesn't mean I don't have to pay my mortgage or stuff like that." His wife, Evelyn, was a speech pathologist in a public-school system. Now she works with injured service members in an Army hospital. Castro describes her as his hero. For one thing, "she never expected to be married to a blind guy."

He also has laudatory words for military doctors and nurses: "We think about the soldiers that get hurt, and we don't think of the doctors and nurses who every day have to see the trauma and suffering that service members go through. It's tough on them. I'm pretty sure they have some post-traumatic stress as well."

Last year, Ivan Castro ran five marathons. (Best time: 4 hours, 11 minutes. He hopes to break the four-hour barrier this year.) He also did a triathlon. And climbed Grays Peak in Colorado (14,270 ft.). He lives life with gusto, whether running a marathon or visiting a museum: "I went to the Air Force Museum in Dayton. I didn't see it with my eyes, but they let me put my hands on the aircraft. Incredible." At Fort Bragg, he oversees the Spanish-language lab and carries out various administrative and logistical tasks, "making sure that soldiers are ready to deploy."

He wanted to command an A-team, but "that wasn't meant to be, so maybe, by taking this job here, I can clear somebody from having to do this job," and let such a person "do the things that I wanted to do: go out and lead." (Have you heard anything nobler than that lately?) "Right now, my main focus is what I can do to help other service members, and anyone else. It's not about Ivan."

He speaks before groups all over the country: various associations and organizations. He does a lot of teaching, too, particularly of those who face severe challenges, physical and mental. And he wants to accept no limitations. "If someone tells me I can't do something, I have to keep myself from punching him in the nose. Instead of saying that I can't do something, let's figure out a way for me to do it."

And how are his spirits? "I'm not going to lie to you: We all have our good times and bad times. I'm just like anyone else." When the doctors told him he would never see again, "I was extremely, extremely bitter. I was at the point where I asked the Lord above, 'Why me?' I was bitter with the Lord, angry with the Lord."

One day, "my wife came in and told me, 'Ivan, if you could only see the hospital ward: You just don't know how fortunate we are.' It's sad to say, but other service members have had to make a huge sacrifice. I have to be grateful for what I have, instead of dwelling on what I don't have. I miss not seeing, I'm not going to lie to you. But I have two legs, two arms, I can talk, I can eat, I can laugh. I have my memory."

Further, "I'm a military guy, and I speak in military terms: God has a mission for me. A plan, an operation."

Castro has what he calls his "demons in the darkness," or "demons in the closet." And "the closet is my brain. I don't see anything. I'm totally blind. I have no light perception. And when the demons want to take over, as soon as they try to, I try to keep them out. I think about all the things I'm grateful for: my wife, my son, the Lord above, His mission for me." There are days "when I walk into the wall, both literally and figuratively. I try to take a step back and not get angry and figure out a way to go around things."

And "you know the best thing about being blind?" (I couldn't imagine what the answer would be.) "I saw for 39 years. So I was able to see the world for 39 years. I've traveled around the world. I saw the good, the bad, and the ugly. The good thing about now is: Everything is beautiful, in my mind. The grass is always green. There's never graffiti on the walls. There's no trash. Everybody looks good—everybody's in shape, everybody's a movie star or rock star." And race is out the window: "There's no brown, white, or black."

A visit with Ivan Castro will teach you, or remind you, not to complain. It will remind you what a free people owes its warriors. And it will remind you to be in awe of those who do the awe-inspiring. **NR**

A Spiritual Force

Fr. Richard John Neuhaus and the reinvigoration of religious conservatism

BY JOHN O'SULLIVAN

If you type "the naked public square" into Google, 0.41 seconds later you get access to 252,000 entries. My guess is that this greatly underestimates the number of times that this phrase has been quoted and the number of people it has influenced. Even so it confers immortality of a kind on whoever happened to coin it. According to Wikipedia, that person was Fr. Richard John Neuhaus, who, while still a Lutheran pastor, wrote a 1984 book of that name arguing that the extreme secularist interpretation of the First Amendment had already led to the effective exclusion of religious argument from political debate and would in time foster an official hostility to religion that the First Amendment was written to prevent. In fact there are uses of the phrase earlier, some from Neuhaus himself, others by friends of his such as Irving Kristol. So it is likely that he coined it, but certain that he gave it common currency.

To achieve immortality as the author of a telling phrase might have mildly pleased Neuhaus, who was not without a justified pride in his writing, but it was not the sort of immortality in which he was really interested. Two of his most important books, *Death on a Friday Afternoon* and *As I Lay Dying*, deal both intimately and powerfully with the certainty that we will all die and hopefully with the promise that we will all enjoy a literal immortality thereafter.

Neuhaus felt that he had been given a special insight into that promise. Recovering from an illness that nearly killed him, he had something like an "out of body" experience in which messengers from God told him, "Everything is ready now." He took this to be not a summons but an assurance that, whether he lived or died in his illness, his essential work had been done.

When he did recover, determining never to doubt the reality of his experience, he became far more conscious of the ubiquitous presence of death in our lives. Children playing in the street, models walking to their next audition, neighbors saying hello as they left their homes—all were dying by degrees and had been since birth. Hobbling about New York as a convalescent, he had to stop himself from rushing up and warning them. Instead he wrote his books to do so, meditating on the meaning of death or, more precisely, on God's promise to overcome it.

We at NATIONAL REVIEW played a very modest walk-on role in this story. While still a Lutheran pastor, as Rick Brookhiser has recounted online, Richard became our religion correspondent. His Lutheranism was a qualification here. We had an informal rule that since NR was frequently mistaken for a Catholic magazine owing to our founder-editor's very public Catholicism, our religion editor should normally be a non-Catholic. Pastor Neuhaus performed superbly in that role until he became Father Neuhaus. His conversion was not a total surprise, of course, because he had long regarded Lutheranism as a reformist branch of the universal Catholic church. Deciding that Rome under John Paul II was steadily adopting the right kind of reforms, Richard became first a Catholic and then a Catholic priest. He had hoped, I think, to lead a larger contingent of Lutherans into the church. That didn't happen, but he did form a bridge between Catholics and all other Christians both before and after his conversion.

Richard also remained until much later NR's religion correspondent, and a friend and counselor to all of us on the magazine. During this time—and before his illness—I commissioned an article by him to contrast Hollywood's treatment of the next world in contemporary films such as *Ghost* with how it handled the same subject in the 1930s and 1940s. We dropped off several such videos at his apartment and waited confidently for a learned and witty article. That weekend he collapsed and almost died.

Meeting him months after his near-death experience, I said that we really hadn't intended him to do such extensive research. He gave a wan smile in reply. Maybe he felt I was dancing on a precipice without due care and attention. For Richard, as a good friend, would not shrink from telling his friends the spiritual truths he felt they needed to hear. That gave his friendship a bracing as well as an affectionate quality.

But then a friend of Richard Neuhaus was getting the benefits of several friendships. He was a Catholic theologian of great depth and sophistication, an energetic pastor in a poor urban parish, a fertile and immensely readable writer, a fearless (and feared) controversialist, and a wit who coined countless epigrams. He also—and this is where his secondary sort of immortality comes in—did more than any other person to create the Christian Right as a serious and important force in American politics.

Fr. Richard John Neuhaus in 2006

ALEX WONG/GETTY

That would have surprised his early associates. As several obituaries have noted, Neuhaus began his adult life as a Canadian, a left-winger, and a devout Lutheran. He first attracted public attention as a left-wing civil rights activist who marched with the Rev. Martin Luther King. He admired the Berrigan brothers for the genuine Christian origins of their revolutionary fervor. And, as Jody Bottum, editor of *First Things*—the magazine Neuhaus founded and edited—has noted, Neuhaus could be teased in later life for the excessive rhetoric in favor of "revolution." (It was, he would explain, the way even quite sane people talked at the time.)

But as the actual revolutions of the 1960s evolved, transforming both liberalism and conservatism, he underwent a series of conversions. Neuhaus never lost his affection for Canada; still, he became an American—and a deeply patriotic one—because he admired the universalist openness and generosity of America. For a while that led him into disagreements with NR (and with me personally) over immigration policy. After some lively debates, however, he accepted the Christian legitimacy of the restrictionist case as a defense of national rights and identity—and came down about 70 percent on NR's side of the argument.

He became a conservative, in large part because his old allies on the left became strong supporters of "abortion rights." As this commitment of liberals became more entrenched, Neuhaus concluded that the life of the innocent unborn was the last great civil-rights cause. It occupied him more than any other issue for the rest of his life. Indeed, the future of the pro-life movement following President Obama's election was the subject of his last major essay in *First Things*.

His conversion to Catholicism (or, again more precisely, his continued commitment to Christian truth) was, of course, the most important to him of the three. If ever these three loyalties clashed, there was no question which would win out in Neuhaus's soul. Indeed, when he thought they were likely to clash, in the apparently unshakeable commitment of the Supreme Court to protecting abortion, he caused immense controversy by producing a special issue of *First Things* agonizing over the possibility that the U.S. regime would render itself illegitimate thereby. He did not recommend "revolution," however, and in his final prophetic essay on the topic he advised: "All of us would do well to ponder the wisdom in the observation that there are no permanently lost causes because there are no permanently won causes." My own interpretation of that judgment is: prayer first, commitment to Christian political action second, and Gandhian-style civil disobedience last.

Thrice converted then, Richard Neuhaus went on to achieve three remarkable things.

First he established a truly great magazine, *First Things*, which anyone seriously interested in the clashing issues of religion and politics felt an absolute obligation to read. Fortunately, as Wilde more or less said, reading it was more than an obligation; it was a pleasure. As editor, Neuhaus hunted down every intelligent theologian and good writer in America to discuss all the important religio-political topics about a year before others did. His writers formed a High Table of orthodoxy for a large and eagerly questioning public. And they were the necessary intellectual underpinning of any religious movement that aspired to influence modern American politics.

Foremost among them as a writer was Neuhaus himself, in his column titled "On the Square"—a monthly feast of journalistic criticism. (Some of his more acerbic asides are quoted in the editorial about him in this issue of NR.) Neuhaus's last service to *First Things* was to discover Jody Bottum and to leave the magazine in his wise and capable hands.

Second, using his editorship of *First Things* as an intellectual base, Neuhaus set out to unite conservative Christians, Jews, and members of other denominations to fight for political causes on which they agreed without surrendering theological positions where they differed. Together with prominent evangelicals such as Richard Land and Charles Colson he inspired and helped to organize ECT—Evangelicals and Catholics Together—which has been the basis of what has not quite accurately been called "the Religious Right" ever since.

Third, with his friends and allies such as Michael Novak and George Weigel—and through the agency of his friendships with Pope John Paul II and later Pope Benedict XVI—Neuhaus persuaded the Catholic church to look more seriously at the wellsprings of wealth creation in a free society. *Centesimus Annus*—John Paul's great social encyclical—was the first flower of that influence. There may be others to come.

NATIONAL REVIEW's verdict on his life is a just one: "Without Richard John Neuhaus the Christian conservatives in America would have been politically much weaker and intellectually far less formidable." It's a worthy epitaph. But Richard never forgot that the only immortality worth bothering about is the literal kind. **NR**

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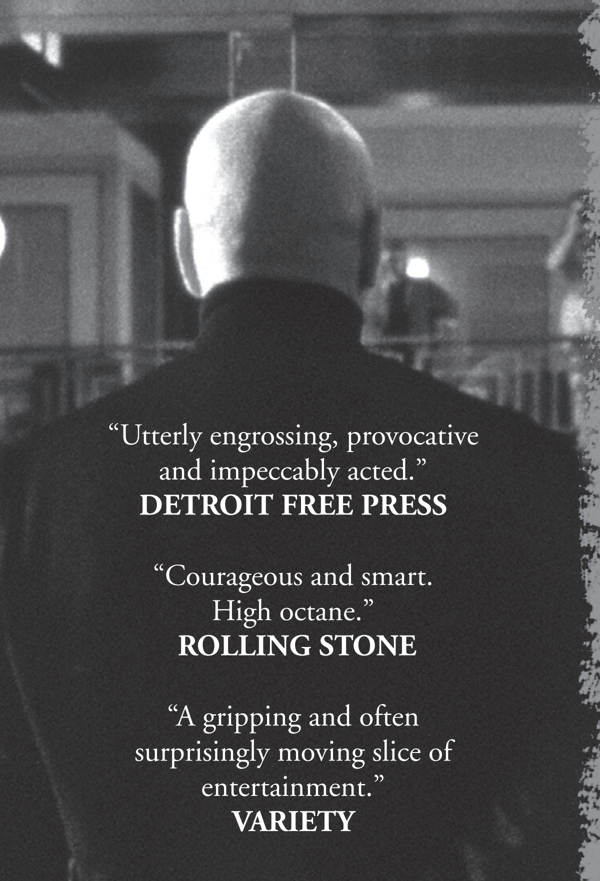
WINNER, BEST ACTOR
(GÖTZ GEORGE)

2000 AUBAGNE INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL
WINNER, BEST DIRECTOR
WINNER, JURY PRIZE

2000 VALENCIENNES
INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL
WINNER, JURY PRIZE

What if the infamous Nazi doctor Josef Mengele, known at Auschwitz as the "Angel of Death" returned to his native Germany voluntarily to stand trial?

AFTER THE TRUTH



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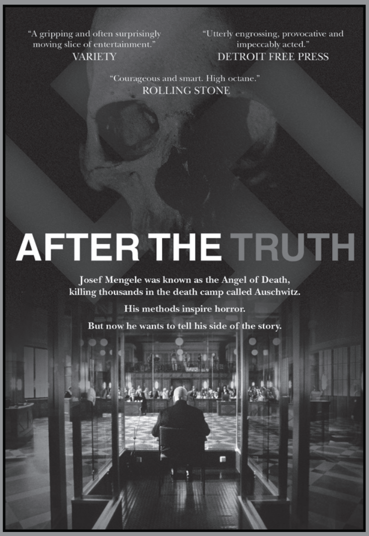

"A gripping and often surprisingly moving slice of entertainment."
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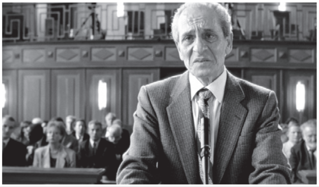

SPECIAL FEATURES

16 page booklet with study questions and essays by Christopher and Kathleen Riley, the screenwriters of *After the Truth*

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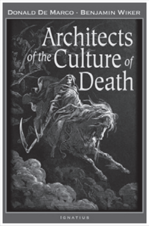
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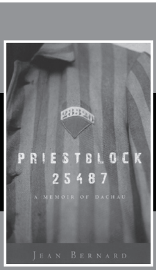

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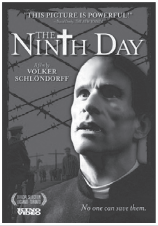

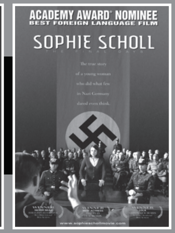

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TWELVE IDEAS FOR THE
Middle Class

A policy symposium

CONTEMPORARY conservatism has too often lost touch with the concrete concerns of middle-class America. For a long time, conservatism thrived politically on the domestic troika of welfare, crime, and income-tax rates. The Left yowled when conservative Republicans ran on these issues, arguing they were distractions from the voting public's true interests, or a cover for sinister sentiments, or both. But people genuinely hated the perversity of the old welfare system; they truly feared crime; and high income-tax rates—and inflation-driven bracket creep—really did take a big bite out of family budgets.

Conservative success over the years—through welfare reform, tough anti-crime policies, and the income-tax cuts of Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush—has reduced the salience of the old triad. Conservatives have yet to fill the gap. In fact, the situation throughout the 1980s, when the Left mired itself in old orthodoxies while the Right addressed the country's problems, has been almost exactly reversed. Now it's conservatism that often feels trapped in amber, wishing it were still 1983.

John McCain's inability last year to address middle-class pocketbook and quality-of-life issues wasn't solely due to the ineptitude of his campaign. It reflected a larger lack of interest in doing so on the right, and a lack of consensus over how exactly to go about it. In a disturbing post-election survey, the polling firm TargetPoint Consulting found that people overwhelmingly identify the Democrats with the middle class. If Democrats can keep that advantage, they will be in the majority for a long time.

This ascendancy shouldn't go unchallenged. Conservatives have a battery of free-market-oriented policies to direct at the problems of the middle class as it lives today. Some of these policies have to do with big, traditional issues (health care and the tax burden on families), while others address concerns that have usually been beneath conservative notice (traffic congestion and the frustrations of air travel). In what follows, our authors present a dozen such conservative ideas for the middle class. They are offered in a tentative spirit, as the start of what should be an intense discussion on the right about how to engage the middle class again.

Some of our friends will object to the very notion of policies that aim to help a particular "class." But the policies we are highlighting do not seek to improve the average person's lot at someone else's expense. They aim to strengthen the country by encouraging such middle-class virtues as thrift, industry, self-reliance, and mobility. We are, after all, a middle-class nation, and that self-definition is something an intelligent American conservatism should strive to conserve—for the health of both America and conservatism.

—RICHARD LOWRY & RAMESH PONNURU

RICHARD ROSS

1 ENCOURAGE PARENTHOOD

Yuval Levin

MARRIED COUPLES RAISING CHILDREN are the core of the middle class. Yet for all the pandering by both parties to middle-class voters, our tax code continues to discriminate against the investment these parents make by raising and rearing future taxpayers. Low-income families have the Earned Income Tax Credit, and high-income taxpayers have dependent exemptions (whose value is greater in the upper tax brackets), but the middle class gets much smaller benefits. A tax reform that aims to appeal to the middle class while advancing the interests of all Americans would therefore be wise to focus on this anomaly.

Key to such an approach would be to expand the child tax credit (to $5,000 per child, for instance) and make it available to all parents up to the amount they pay in combined income and payroll taxes. Such a move should be part of a broader tax reform that would cut the number of tax brackets and drastically reduce the number of itemized deductions, among other changes. Such a reform could be made revenue-neutral, or nearly so, and would for the first time make the tax code evenhanded toward childrearing rather than imposing extra costs on middle-class parents.

Some conservatives would object to such a reform on the grounds that it would not directly encourage economic growth, would take many families off the tax rolls, and would use the tax code for social engineering. But the investment involved in raising children (on whom our entire entitlement system is based) is currently overtaxed, so in the long run, cutting those taxes would encourage economic growth by encouraging family growth. Families taken off the tax rolls by the credit would come back when they had raised their children—which wouldn't happen, for instance, to families removed from the ranks of taxpayers under a flat tax. And some social engineering through the tax code is unavoidable, so why not use it to promote the growth and strength of families—a conservative objective if ever there was one? Few other policy reforms could speak as powerfully to the middle class while advancing conservative ideals.

Mr. Levin is the Hertog Fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center and a senior editor of The New Atlantis.

2

MAKE SAVING EASIER

Ramesh Ponnuru

AMERICANS SAVE TOO LITTLE, and everyone knows it. Some government policies make it harder to save, or reduce the incentive to do so; other policies are designed to encourage saving, but these are often ineffective. Americans on the middle to lower rungs of the economic ladder, in particular, have little in the way of assets, in part because of the burden of payroll taxes.

One reason President Bush sought to include a personal saving option within Social Security was to help these people accumulate capital, but Democrats blocked him out of fear that the proposal would undermine the whole program. Their alternative—talked up by such Democrats as White House chief of staff Rahm Emanuel and budget chief Peter Orszag—has for a decade been to create a new savings program outside Social Security. People whose companies do not offer 401(k) plans could contribute to this program and get a matching grant in the form of a tax credit. A "saver's credit" already exists, but it is limited, complicated, and unknown to most taxpayers. Legislators should address those inadequacies.

They should also look at other ways to make it easier for people to save. Companies that have new employees participate in 401(k)s unless they opt out tend to have higher participation than companies that adopt the opposite default setting. Some companies have also boosted contribution rates by setting them to increase gradually over time—again, with opt-outs. But state regulations are an obstacle to these practices. Governors and state legislators should remove them.

Mark Iwry of the Brookings Institution and David John of the Heritage Foundation have proposed creating "automatic IRAs." Businesses that do not want to administer 401(k) programs or match employee contributions to them could serve as a conduit for automatic paycheck deductions into tax-advantaged savings accounts. Employees would get some of the main benefits of a 401(k) without burdening businesses. (The proposal has been designed so that it will not prompt companies to drop their 401(k)s for the new program.)

The idea that ordinary people can invest for their retirements is getting a bad rap right now, as it has in previous bear markets. We've all heard the joke about "201(k)"s. But long-term participation in capital markets is still a good idea, maybe a better idea than ever. Millions of people would be better off if they had invested more in previous decades. They would be more economically independent—and almost certainly, as a result, more conservative in their politics. Republicans should work with Democrats to invest in a free-market future.

Mr. Ponnuru is a senior editor of NATIONAL REVIEW.

3

REDUCE HEALTH-CARE COSTS

James C. Capretta

MARKET-BASED HEALTH-CARE REFORM, when properly explained, can have real appeal to the American middle class. Most families must deal with a difficult health condition of some sort, and while they would welcome any change that makes it easier to pay the bills, they don't want the government to stand in the way of promising breakthroughs. That's why Americans are sensibly wary of giving the federal government too much power and control over their health-care arrangements. Market-based care would control rising costs without imposing regulatory barriers to cutting-edge care.

A properly functioning marketplace would reward efficiency and innovation by letting cost-conscious consumers seek out better care at lower cost. In time, competition would bring real changes to how health care is provided and slow the rise in premiums that is putting pressure on so many family budgets.

The middle class would also stand to gain the most from the tax changes that are central to a market-based reform strategy. Today's open-ended tax preference for employer-paid insurance premiums confers the most benefits on workers with expensive insurance and high incomes. As an example, excluding $15,000 in health insurance from income taxes is worth $1,500 to someone in the 10 percent marginal income tax bracket but $5,250 for someone in the 35 percent bracket.

Market-based reform plans would eliminate this imbalance by substituting a fixed tax credit for the open-ended deduction and shifting control from employers to individuals and families. During the 2008 campaign, Sen. John McCain proposed a $2,500 per individual or $5,000 per family tax credit for health insurance. These credits could be used to purchase insurance through an employer or on the open market. The nonpartisan Tax Policy

Center estimated that the McCain plan would reduce tax costs for the average middle-class family by nearly $1,300 per year in 2013. Higher-income households would benefit much less.

Giving families financial control and ownership of their health insurance would also bring more security, as many of the uninsured lack coverage because they are in between jobs. With ownership and control, families could keep the same insurance as they change jobs or leave the workforce for such purposes as further education. Would-be entrepreneurs could also take more job risks without the fear that a business failure would mean loss of health coverage.

Mr. Capretta is a fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center and a health-policy consultant.

4

IMPROVE EDUCATION TAX BENEFITS

Cesar V. Conda

AMERICANS HAVE ALWAYS VIEWED EDUCATION as the best ticket to the middle class and beyond. And in today's global economy, Americans must increase their investment in education, just as some of our major foreign competitors have done. For instance, Chinese consumers spent $72.6 billion on education in 2007, which is 62 percent more than they averaged in the previous five years, according to Euromonitor International.

To date, most conservatives have viewed education as a second-tier policy issue, and the results of this neglect are clear. The standard conservative education platform of school choice, block grants to the states, and abolishing the Department of Education has little appeal to middle-class suburban voters, especially independents. Here's an idea that would: a universal education tax deduction.

The current tax code includes preferential treatment for investments in physical capital, such as plant and equipment spending, but not for investments in human capital, such as education—even though both forms of investment contribute to productivity and economic growth. Under a universal education tax-deduction plan, taxpayers would be allowed an unlimited above-the-line deduction for certain qualified tuition and related expenses incurred by students attending primary, secondary, and post-secondary institutions, and for certain expenses related to home schooling and tutoring. To ensure that low-income families also benefit from such a tax plan, a refundable tax-credit component could be added.

Ideally, taxpayers would be allowed a dollar-for-dollar tax deduction for all qualifying expenses. However, given the exploding budget deficit, policymakers could offset the plan's revenue cost by reducing or eliminating a number of redundant education tax provisions in current law, such as the exclusion for employer-provided education assistance, a deduction for qualified higher-education expenses, the Section 223 special deduction for teachers, tax exemption for scholarships, the HOPE credit (created under Bill Clinton), and the Lifetime Learning credit, among others. Ending these education-related tax preferences would generate about $7 billion annually. It would also simplify the tax code by eliminating duplicative education tax programs, which are often riddled with complex rules and regulations, in favor of a simple tax deduction for all educational expenses available to all taxpayers.

From a policy perspective, this proposal would do the following: provide neutral tax treatment for education expenses, thus recognizing the investment nature of education; increase the level of federal education support without expanding federal bureaucracies; enable parents to make better educational choices for their children; make higher education and continuing education more affordable; and simplify the tax code for millions of taxpayers.

Politically, a universal education tax deduction would have great appeal to the broad middle class; it would energize conservatives behind tax relief for parents who send their children to private schools or home-school them; and, more important, it would win over parents who are scrimping and saving so that their kids can go to college.

Mr. Conda was assistant for domestic policy to Vice President Dick Cheney and senior economic-policy adviser to the Mitt Romney for President campaign.

5

FIND ALTERNATIVES TO THE B.A.

Charles Murray

YOU ARE THE COLLEGE-AGE CHILD of middle-class parents, told since you were sentient that you must go to college. You're smart enough, but academics aren't what you like, and getting a traditional liberal education would be like having a four-year toothache. You're a sports nut and want to get into the pro-sports industry. So you check out some college websites. Good news: There are colleges that offer majors in sports administration. You look at the course catalogues and find eight or ten courses that you really want to take. You can get those out of the way in two years, maybe a year and a half.

Then your high-school counselor tells you the bad news: Getting the classroom training you need isn't enough. If you don't get a bachelor's degree, you will not get a job interview. You can earn the degree if you must, filling out the other two years with gut courses. But your parents' middle-class income doesn't leave money for college tuition, so you're going to have to take out student loans. You'd much rather skip the two needless years and get on with your life.

I have just described the kind of situation that faces hundreds of thousands of middle-class young people who attend four-year residential colleges. It's senseless. The B.A. has become the union card for social respectability ("only a high-school graduate" has become a sneer), even as it has become uninterpretable as a job qualification. These days, assuming that someone with a B.A. knows *anything* is iffy—employers routinely report that they get applicants with B.A.s who cannot write a coherent paragraph.

The existence of so many residential colleges isn't the problem. Colleges should continue to be full of students, some of whom will be pursuing a traditional liberal education. But students shouldn't have to stay there for four years just to get a piece of paper that costs so much and signifies so little.

So let's stop it. Let's use the CPA exam as a model, and substitute certifications for the educational credentials that young people take into a job interview. The certifications can be based on multiple-choice tests, writing samples, and work samples in any combination—whatever enables the employer to assess what applicants know and are able to do, not where they learned it and how long it took them.

New laws aren't necessary. Resentment of the B.A., with its five- or six-figure price tag, already hovers near the boiling point. Students, faculty, parents, and employers are all increasingly aware of the sham it so often represents. Tearing down the gatekeeping role that the B.A. has acquired in American life could be as simple as starting to talk about it.

Mr. Murray is the W. H. Brady Scholar at the American Enterprise Institute. His most recent book is Real Education: Four Simple Truths for Bringing America's Schools Back to Reality *(Crown Forum).*

6

BOOST TEACHER QUALITY

Frederick M. Hess

AT THE 2008 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION, Barack Obama promised to "recruit an army of new teachers and pay them higher salaries and give them more support, and in exchange I'll ask for higher standards and more accountability." Like most of what Obama says, this sounds wonderful. The trick, though, is that if you consider only objective factors, it's very hard to tell good teachers from bad ones.

All the observable characteristics that researchers can measure, including everything from licensure status to verbal acuity, explain less than 10 percent of the variation in student performance across classrooms. While the nation's 3.3 million teachers matter a lot, credentials and seniority have very little to do with how well they educate our children. Yet credentials and seniority are what determine most teachers' pay.

Leaving such formulas aside, competent school and district leaders have a pretty good idea of which teachers are doing good work. Like anyone who runs an organization where paper metrics are poor predictors of quality, they should be able to compete aggressively for the widest possible pool of talent, monitor performance, weed out mediocrity, and reward excellence. The reason they usually can't do this is that our schools still rely on the industrial model that prevailed for most of the 20th century.

In that era, intelligent woman college graduates who did not want to be secretaries had little choice but to teach. With an immense pool of smart women at their disposal, schools adopted seniority-driven pay scales that ignored performance. Teachers appreciated the convenience and predictability of such systems, and while they sometimes became frustrated at their slow progress up the ladder, they had few other options. And states, with no need to worry about a shrinking applicant pool, erected burdensome licensure systems. With these barriers to entry and advancement in place, it is no surprise that, as more jobs opened to women in the 1970s, the quality of new teachers plunged. To make things worse, by swelling the ranks of teachers at a pace that has dramatically outstripped student enrollment in the past half century, states have aggravated the talent shortage while consuming dollars that might have rewarded good teachers.

How can schools address this situation? Overhaul state licensure systems, which deter applicants who have not been credentialed by schools of education, to make them receptive to talent—including Teach for America recruits and career switchers. Emulate education officials Joel Klein of New York City and Michelle Rhee of Washington, D.C., by devising smart ways to evaluate performance and then pushing to remove ineffective teachers. Put new dollars into rewarding excellence, scarce skills, and challenging assignments instead of making new hires. And, since having teachers do the same job for decades is a sure way to repel talent, rethink the profession to include more options for change and growth.

Mr. Hess is director of education-policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute. His books include A Qualified Teacher in Every Classroom?

7

STOP DISCOURAGING START-UPS

Kevin D. Williamson

ADAM SWEET IS AN OREGON COLLEGE STUDENT who organized some friends into a moving business with a specialty in medical clinics. Alan Merrifield is a Californian who ran a pest-control business free of chemicals and poisons. Both were shut down by occupational-licensing laws that largely serve to protect entrenched business interests while doing little or nothing to protect the public.

Licensure laws make it difficult to start a business or pursue one part time. If you turn a buck from your knack for planting rosebushes or arranging their flowers, you could find yourself fined and jailed for practicing unlicensed landscape architecture or outlaw floristry. These laws keep innovation and new competition out of the market—and, in the process, they make everything more expensive, from interior-design services to medical care.

In the cases of Sweet and Merrifield, challenges from the Pacific Legal Foundation forced authorities to admit what everybody knows: These laws exist mostly to protect politically connected businesses. In the case of the moving company, the law allowed other movers—but not the general public—to challenge the licensing of a new competitor. In the case of the pest-control firm, laws were specifically written to carve the market up into cartels particular to different kinds of pests—one license for seagulls, another for rats. "Somehow the state has become confused in its priorities," Merrifield said. "It's supposed to protect its citizens, not the rats, mice, and pigeons that invade their homes."

There's much to be gained by liberalizing these regulations. In New Zealand, for instance, some basic dental services are available from graduates of two-year professional programs, but experiments along those lines in the United States have been blocked by the American Dental Association, ensuring that no cavity is filled except by expensive, licensed guild members with four years of undergraduate work, a doctorate, and ADA approval. Whether in pest control or furniture hauling, small businesses drive employment, and consumers benefit from having more choice and competition in the marketplace. We may want to keep licensing neurosurgeons, but rat-catchers and interior decorators don't need a government charter.

Mr. Williamson is a deputy managing editor of NATIONAL REVIEW.

8

LIBERATE HOMEWORKERS

John Hood

IN CONGRESS AND IN STATE CAPITALS, liberal politicians have learned the hard way not to pick a fight with America's homeschoolers. When they do, they get jammed phone lines, bulging in-boxes, and spirited (but, of course, erudite) condemnation. The effect is reminiscent of conservative efforts in the 1970s to organize and activate millions of homemakers to defeat the Equal Rights Amendment and resist government intrusions into matters of family, faith, and child-rearing.

It's time to organize and activate another potentially powerful domestic constituency: the American homeworker. (Sorry, kids, I don't mean you. Go do your math.)

Definitions and estimates vary, but it's safe to say that at least 30 million Americans own home-based businesses or work at least part of their week at home, either as independent contractors or as telecommuting employees. These homeworkers play a major role in alleviating traffic congestion—a role far bigger than that of mass transit in all but a handful of U.S. cities—and represent the leading edge of technological transformation.

Despite endless political blather, policy has failed to accommodate the expanding ranks of home-based entrepreneurs, flex-timers, and freelancers. Governments at all levels tax them punitively, obstruct their opportunities, and make their lives unnecessarily complicated. Here are the key elements of a Homeworker Liberation Agenda:

- Congress should preempt goofy state tax codes that force homeworkers to pay income taxes in both their resident states and those housing their employers. Congress should also enact legislation encouraging employers and employees to work out mutually advantageous arrangements about comp time, flex time, and overtime pay, and removing the barriers to such arrangements.
- Both the states and Congress should make clear that heavy-handed workplace-safety laws will not be extended to home-based businesses or offices.
- Local governments should liberalize outdated zoning codes that keep people from running businesses in their homes, particularly businesses not involving customer traffic. Because many localities fund transportation infrastructure with property taxes rather than usage-based charges (such as gas taxes and tolls), they should grant full-time homeworkers a credit against their annual property-tax bills.

The natural political home for tens of millions of homeworkers is the conservative movement. But to win their support, we must go beyond platitudes and advocate practical solutions to their problems.

Mr. Hood is president of the John Locke Foundation, a public-policy think tank in North Carolina.

9

RELIEVE TRAFFIC CONGESTION

Tyler Duvall

OF THE MAJOR PROBLEMS IN AMERICA that affect the middle class, traffic congestion is perhaps the most solvable. While the media discussion of transportation has focused on "crumbling infrastructure," the bigger drain on middle-class prosperity is highway congestion in America's metropolitan areas. The Texas Transportation Institute's 2007 Urban Mobility Report showed that Americans spend a whopping 4.2 billion hours per year sitting in traffic—up dramatically in the last 25 years.

This does not even take into account the costs associated with growing uncertainty about travel times, distortion of real-estate markets, wasted fuel, increases in emissions, and diminished access to job centers. Instead of spending time with their families, participating in civic life, or investing in their careers, millions of middle-class Americans are stuck sitting in cars.

The root cause of congestion is quite simple: Prices aren't set to balance supply and demand. Imagine if consumers paid the government a weekly food tax that permitted them to take all the food they wanted from any grocery store. This policy would create massive food shortages. Yet, by and large, that's how we pay for highways in America. As long as highway prices have little to do with highway costs, congestion will be inevitable.

Recently, however, serious cracks in status-quo defeatism have emerged. Thanks to technology breakthroughs, such as electronic toll tags and stickers, most major metropolitan areas are now in the process of implementing state-of-the-art, variable time-of-day road-pricing programs. The projects completed to date reveal four critical points: 1) variable pricing immediately and sustainably reduces congestion; 2) the more road space you price, the cheaper the price; 3) most drivers love the experiments once they're implemented; and 4) pricing can be installed on a road in a matter of months.

With a growing body of research and real-world demonstrations, policymakers now have a firm foundation on which to build. Pricing policies can be flexibly integrated with mass-transit investments, targeted subsidies to low-income people, and tax cuts. In addition, pricing can attract private-sector debt and equity capital to upgrade infrastructure. Implementation is sometimes tricky, and it requires a lot of data to get the pricing right. But very few other policies can achieve so many "wins" as variable pricing can when properly designed.

Mr. Duvall was acting undersecretary for policy in the Department of Transportation in the George W. Bush administration.

10

UPDATE OUR AIRPORTS

Robert W. Poole Jr.

In the 30 years since Congress enacted airline deregulation, air travel has become affordable for the average family. Respectable studies put the annual savings to consumers thanks to airfare competition at $10–20 billion. The trade-off is that plane travel today is more like bus travel than like the luxury service it used to be—but I think that trade-off is serving us better than the alternative of going back to monopoly-priced airline cartels. So the first principle of air-travel reform is: Do no harm, by leaving deregulation alone.

The second thing to realize is that when Congress deregulated airlines in 1978, it left unchanged the way air travel's infrastructure is provided. Airports and air-traffic control, while marginally better than in 1978, are still run mostly by tax-funded government bureaucracies. Today's congestion, in the skies and at a handful of major hub airports, stems directly from this non-market aspect of aviation infrastructure. That means we still have unfinished business from 30 years ago: Deregulate (or "marketize") airports and air-traffic control.

For congested airports, like those in the New York area and a handful of others, the most important reform would be congestion pricing of runways. Today's landing fees are proportional to the weight of the plane, which encourages airlines to clog these airports with lightweight regional jets providing hourly service (e.g., from New York to Chicago), when the same number of passengers could be accommodated on larger jets operating every other hour. But no airline wants to be the only one to reduce flight frequency, so they all create a "tragedy of the commons," producing massive delays. Market-value runway pricing would change those incentives, dramatically reducing congestion.

Air-traffic control needs to be reinvented as well, so it will have enough capacity to handle continued growth at an affordable cost. This means replacing manual, radar-based control with GPS satellite navigation, digital communications, and automation of routine functions. But it also requires institutional reform. Instead of being a tax-funded, congressionally micromanaged bureaucracy, the air-traffic organization should be detached from the FAA and converted into a user-funded, user-governed nonprofit entity like the highly successful Nav Canada (and similar entities in Australia, Germany, the U.K., etc.). That would free it from interference by Congress and dependence on always-uncertain annual appropriations.

Those changes would finish the job Congress began with the Airline Deregulation Act of 1978.

Mr. Poole is the Searle Freedom Trust Fellow and Director of Transportation Policy at the Reason Foundation.

11

LOOSEN HOUSING MARKETS

Reihan Salam

After Gov. Jon Corzine's lackluster 2009 state-of-the-state address, New Jersey Republicans—beleaguered after a long run of stinging defeats—suddenly perked up. Once considered a serious contender for national office, Corzine is now seen as a miserable failure, and his credentials as former CEO of Goldman Sachs no longer seem quite as impressive. But in order to win back New Jersey, not to mention other heavily urban states, Republicans will need to address the housing affordability crisis.

"Crisis" might sound a little strong, particularly when we're going through a massive housing collapse, with prices plummeting across the country. Yet even now, housing prices in New Jersey run far ahead of average incomes. The result is that the state is hemorrhaging middle-class families, who can no longer afford to live close to their jobs. And this isn't just New Jersey's problem. Across the Northeast and coastal California, broken housing markets are sapping the economic vitality of some of our biggest, densest, most productive regions. In the short term, New Jersey's loss is, say, North Carolina's gain. Over the longer term, however, America's economic edge will erode if we can't make all our regions into engines of upward mobility.

What is the cause of the affordability crisis? Although high demand for housing should mean a high rate of housing construction, which in turn should keep prices low, New Jersey is one of several states in which high demand runs into severe supply constraints at the local level. For the most part, this is motivated by simple NIMBYism: Homeowners and historic preservationists want to keep their towns construction-free, if only to keep property values high.

As economists Edward L. Glaeser and Joseph Gyourko explain in *Rethinking Federal Housing Policy*, the home mortgage interest deduction, which is designed to increase the availability of owner-occupied housing, has a perverse effect in supply-constrained regions: Instead of making it easier for people to buy houses, it simply bids up the price. To help ease the problem, Glaeser and Gyourko propose capping the home mortgage interest deduction in supply-constrained counties to $300,000 of mortgage debt rather than $1,000,000. The revenue generated by the lower cap would be given to local governments that allow new construction.

There is a real political risk here. In the short term, affluent homebuyers will feel the pinch of the lower cap. At the same time, however, this measure will put the GOP on the side of those middle-class families who can't afford decent housing, a large and growing constituency.

Mr. Salam is an associate editor at The Atlantic *and co-author, with Ross Douthat, of* Grand New Party: How Republicans Can Win the Working Class and Save the American Dream.

12

DEFEND FREE TRADE

Stephen Spruiell

TRADE POLICY WORKS FOR THE MIDDLE CLASS when Americans are free to buy the lowest-priced and highest-quality goods and services from all over the world. Wal-Mart, the nation's largest importer of containerized freight, saves American families an estimated $2,500 a year. Global competition drives down prices for consumers, and market-opening trade agreements create export opportunities for businesses large and small. Protectionists argue that these trends have destroyed jobs and hurt the middle class, and that President Obama should erect trade barriers to mitigate the damage. Upon a closer look at the data, their arguments crumble.

Since the mid-1990s, trade between the U.S. and the rest of the world has grown by an average of 7.5 percent a year, and the trade deficit (imports minus exports) has grown by an average of 14.5 percent a year. During that same period, the economy added an average of 1.25 million new jobs a year, and the average unemployment rate was a very low 5 percent. Spikes in unemployment during the recessions of 2001–02 and late 2008 coincided with declines in both total trade and the trade deficit, as Americans had less money to spend on imports. High rates of job creation, on the other hand, were accompanied by high rates of trading activity. Trade is a sign of a healthy, dynamic economy.

Another sign of a healthy economy is job churn—the volume of jobs created and destroyed. Job churn is highest during periods of rapid economic growth, and it is driven primarily by people's leaving their jobs for better opportunities, not by layoffs. Trade increases the efficiency of this process. Without government interference, inefficient domestic industries either become more efficient or lose business to import competition. Greater efficiency means lower prices, which leave consumers with more money to save and invest or spend elsewhere. On balance, this activity creates more jobs than it destroys.

Tariffs and other protectionist walls, by contrast, tend to destroy more jobs than they save. A small group of American manufacturers have worked Congress into a frenzy over China's exchange rates, and they are pushing for a 27.5 percent tariff on all Chinese imports. A tariff of that magnitude would impose immediate costs on American consumers—who bought $28.2 billion worth of stuff from China last November alone—and the inevitable retaliatory tariffs would shut down the fastest-growing market for American exports. That would be unwise even in the best of boom times. In a global recession, it would be catastrophic.

Mr. Spruiell is a staff reporter for NATIONAL REVIEW ONLINE.

Faith-Based ECONOMICS

Keynes makes a comeback, but his ideas are still wrong

BY ALAN REYNOLDS

A RECENT *Wall Street Journal* article describes "the new old big thing" in economic policy: "Around the world . . . policy makers are invoking the ideas of British economist John Maynard Keynes . . . who argued that governments should fight the Great Depression in the 1930s with heavy spending." In the *New York Times Magazine*, Robert Skidelsky appoints Keynes "man of the year." Robert Reich, labor secretary under President Clinton, praises the "rebirth of Keynes."

Long before Keynes published *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* in 1936, he was a highly persuasive and witty writer on economic issues, often appearing in London newspapers and talking on the radio. But that was very long ago, and Keynes died in 1946. Economics has since become less reliant on armchair theorizing and more deeply grounded in statistical fact.

Using quaint Keynesian arguments to rationalize heavy spending is nothing new. But its resurgent popularity is somewhat surprising. Democrats and their favorite economists spent the past 25 years bemoaning the "twin deficits" of the 1980s and then claimed that the strong economy of the late 1990s was the result of President Clinton's fiscal restraint—the precise opposite of "fiscal stimulus." Also working in the anti-Keynesian mode, former treasury secretary Robert Rubin co-authored a 2004 paper with forecaster Allen Sinai and Peter Orzsag of the Brookings Institution, who now has been tapped by Obama to lead the Office of Management and Budget. They argued that "budget deficits decrease national saving, which reduces domestic investment and increases borrowing abroad." Big budget deficits, warned Rubin, Orzsag, and Sinai, would "reduce future national income" and risk a "decline in confidence [which] can reduce stock prices."

Democrats' anxieties about future deficits had abated only slightly by January 2008, when the incoming head of the Congressional Budget Office, Douglas Elmendorf, co-authored a Brookings paper with Jason Furman, nominated deputy director of Obama's National Economic Council. They strongly favored monetary stimulus over fiscal stimulus, and they warned that "it is critical that efforts to fight a recession do not end up increasing the long-run budget deficit and thus harming long-run growth." Elmendorf and Furman rightly noted that "the idea that Congress should make legislative changes to tax or spending policies in order to counter the business cycle has fallen into disfavor among economists."

Mr. Reynolds is a senior fellow of the Cato Institute and the author of Income and Wealth.

In November 2000, for example, Skidelsky wrote in *The Economist* that "what survives today of Keynesian economics is . . . Keynes's intuition that . . . the source of instability lies in the logic of financial markets." In other words, not much. Skidelsky noted that "monetary policy has supplanted fiscal policy as a short-term stabilizer." And he concluded that deep experience with governments' "capacity for error and folly suggests that discretionary policy should be used very sparingly."

Many of the economists who repeatedly prophesied in ominous fashion about the dangers of relatively trivial deficit spending during the Reagan and Bush years have inexplicably become enthusiastic supporters of deficits likely to exceed 10 percent of GDP during the Obama administration. If asked about this remarkable political agility, they would probably say their change of heart comes because (1) some forecasters now say this recession is going to be extremely long and deep, and (2) the Fed doubled the monetary base (bank reserves and currency) from September to December, but that action did not produce instant recovery.

John Kenneth Galbraith had advice for the first point: "Never base policy on a forecast." As recently as August, some prominent forecasters were warning of runaway inflation and urging the Fed to tighten. Forecasters failed to predict the financial crisis in September and today have no idea how long or how deep the recession will be. They're making guesses.

On the second point, the lagging effects of monetary policy can take some time to become apparent. The U.S. economy does not turn on a dime. Some are arguing that what the Fed is doing will be both ineffective and inflationary, which is contradictory. My advice: Never underestimate the Fed.

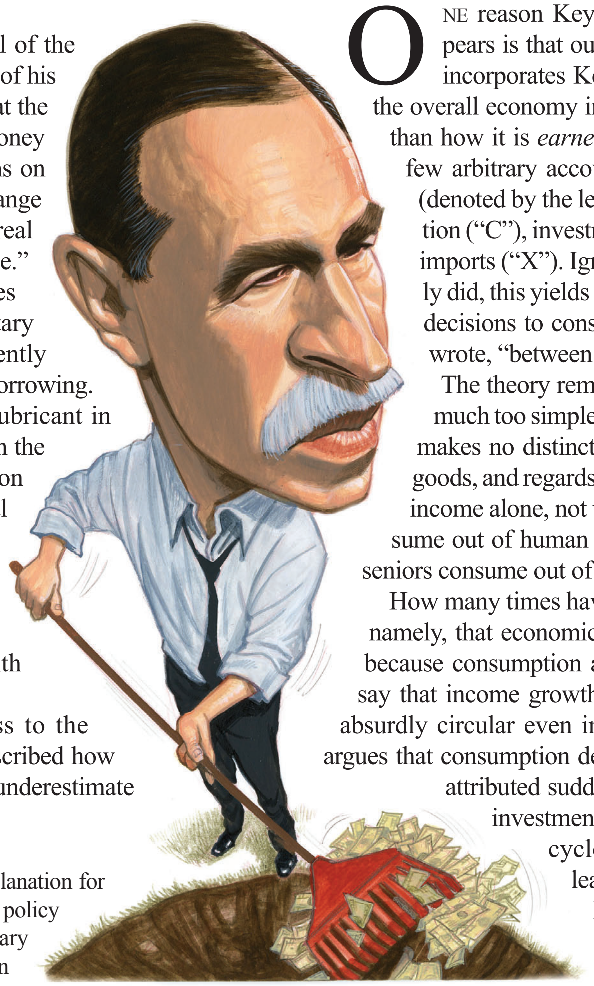
Keynes was not quite as skeptical of the efficacy of monetary policy as many of his followers have become. He wrote that the effect of increasing the quantity of money is "not nugatory," and that "the terms on which the monetary authority will change the quantity of money enters as a real determinant into the economic scheme." But by the 1960s, Keynes's apostles were minimizing the role of monetary policy and exaggerating the apparently magical properties of government borrowing. Inflation was considered a useful lubricant in the machinery of full employment. In the late 1960s and 1970s, rising inflation was routinely described by a thermal metaphor ("overheating"), and regarded as a social problem to be endlessly fought with fiscal policy (a surtax) and with income policy (wage/price controls), but never with monetary policy.

Milton Friedman's 1967 address to the American Economic Association described how Keynesian theorizing had come to underestimate the power of the Federal Reserve:

> Keynes offered simultaneously an explanation for the presumed impotence of monetary policy to stem the Depression, a non-monetary interpretation of the Depression, and an alternative to monetary policy for meeting the Depression, and his offering was avidly accepted. . . . The wide acceptance of these views in the economics profession meant that for some two decades monetary policy was believed by all but a few reactionary souls to have been rendered obsolete by new economic knowledge. Money did not matter. Its only role was the minor one of keeping interest rates low, in order to hold down interest payments in the government budget, contribute to the "euthanasia of the rentier," and maybe stimulate investment a bit to assist government spending in maintaining a high level of aggregate demand.

Unlike Keynes's 1930 *Treatise on Money*, his *General Theory* offered no coherent theory of inflation or the price level but instead treated nominal and real income as the same thing. He suggested that "an increase in the quantity of money will have no effect whatever on prices, so long as there is any unemployment." That idea was later formalized in the Phillips Curve tradeoff, whereby lower unemployment could supposedly be achieved through higher inflation. The results of that policy bias were the disastrous inflationary recessions of 1974–75 and 1980–82.

In 1978, future Nobel laureate Robert Lucas Jr. wrote an obituary for these ideas, "After Keynesian Economics," along with Thomas Sargent of the University of Minnesota. They showed that "Keynesian . . . predictions were wildly incorrect and that the doctrine on which they were based is fundamentally flawed." The hubris of expert demand-management through fiscal policy should have suffered a permanent loss of credibility 30 years ago. But memory is short.



ISMAEL ROLDAN

ONE reason Keynesian theorizing never quite disappears is that our national-income model deliberately incorporates Keynesian concepts. Keynes described the overall economy in terms of how money is *spent* rather than how it is *earned*. He divided national income into a few arbitrary accounting categories, describing income (denoted by the letter "Y") as being spent for consumption ("C"), investment ("I"), government ("G"), and net imports ("X"). Ignoring foreign trade, as Keynes usually did, this yields the famous equation: Y=C+I+G. "The decisions to consume and the decisions to invest," he wrote, "between them determine incomes."

The theory remains much too popular—because it is much too simple. Keynes's discussion of consumption makes no distinction between durable and nondurable goods, and regards consumption as dependent on current income alone, not wealth. Yet young people clearly consume out of human capital (expected future income) and seniors consume out of accumulated financial capital.

How many times have we read the demand-side fallacy—namely, that economic growth "depends on" consumption, because consumption accounts for 70 percent of GDP? To say that income growth depends on consumption would be absurdly circular even in Keynesian terms, because Keynes argues that consumption depends on income. In reality, Keynes attributed sudden gyrations in income to changes in investment. This is a real theory of the business cycle, which may be both the best and least understood part of Keynes's work.

Recessions arise, he said, "where investment is being made in conditions which are unstable and cannot endure, because it is prompted by expectations which are destined to disappointment." Think of highly leveraged investments in Las Vegas condos a few years ago by those who thought they could resell at a higher price before the teaser rate on the mortgage went higher.

If such wrongheaded private investment collapsed, Keynes worried, fear could keep investment depressed for a long time. So he proposed offsetting the drop in private investment with government purchases. When it came to public works, the more wasteful the better—because unproductive investments would not crowd out private investment: "If the Treasury were to fill old bottles with banknotes, bury them at suitable depths in disused coal mines which are then filled up to the surface with town rubbish, and leave it to private enterprise on well-tried principles of *laissez-faire* to dig the notes up again . . . there need be no more unemployment."

Such reasoning lay behind the infamous "multiplier," which the late Harry Johnson described as an "inexhaustibly versatile mechanical toy." Because people employed in burying and digging up bottles will supposedly employ other people by spending their paychecks, the initial increase in government spending was thought to have a *multiple* effect on total spending. And that, said Keynes, will lead to an "increase in employment and hence in real income." But checks received for producing nothing are not *real* income. Real income per worker depends on real *output* per worker—incentives to *produce*, not incentives to spend.

If there is no multiplier effect, the multiplier is one—a billion dollars of government spending adds a billion to national income, but no more. Keynes offered a hypothetical example suggesting the multiplier could be ten if people promptly spent 90 percent of added income on consumer goods. That is how he came to imagine that "public works even of doubtful utility may pay for themselves over and over again at a time of severe unemployment if only from the diminished cost of relief expenditure."

Recent research finds multipliers to be very small at best, if not negative. In 2002, the IMF published "The Effectiveness of Fiscal Policy in Stimulating Economic Activity—a Review of the Literature" by Richard Hemming, Michael Kell, and Selma Mahfouz. They found that "short-term multipliers average around a half for taxes and one for spending, with only modest variation across countries and models."

The C+I+G rubric is a tautology—true by definition. Yet it seduces people into confusing the *uses* of income (spending) with the *sources* of income (production). One person's spending is another person's income, but that does not mean the mere act of spending money creates *real* income. If that were true, then every poor country could become rich by simply dropping money from helicopters.

A theory that can explain everything explains nothing. If Keynesian theorists refuse to accept *any* evidence as contradicting their theory, they are practicing a secular theology, not science.

Aside from transfer payments, the *sources* of income are payments for producing something consumers or taxpayers are willing to pay for. Saving generally involves spending too (buying stocks or bonds), with sellers receiving what the buyers spend. The fear-driven urge to keep savings piling up in cash (rather than stocks, bonds, or property) could become deflationary. But that is why the Fed has been meeting that surge in the demand for money with additional supply, while also making it unrewarding for potential investors to just sit on T-bills.

Today's business press is full of Keynesian stories about the "paradox of thrift"—fretting about consumers' saving more and therefore buying less. Yet it's quite possible for both savings and consumption to rise at the same time if income or wealth rises. And incomes and wealth *will* rise if conditions become more favorable for producers, including workers. Lower inflation, for example, was already raising households' real disposable income by October and November of 2008.

I sometimes joke about having had trouble with Keynesian accounting in school—because I always wanted to *subtract* G. It's not just a joke. Government purchases of real resources absorb labor, land, equipment, and materials, and thereby raise the cost of production for private businesses, damaging the profitability of private investment. Government transfer payments are a disincentive for those who receive the benefits and for the taxpayers who pay.

Alberto Alesina of Harvard published a major long-term study of fiscal policy changes in 18 economies in *The American Economic Review*, September 2002. What they found was that "fiscal stabilizations that have led to an increase in growth consist mainly of spending cuts, particularly in government wages and transfers, while those associated with a downturn in the economy are characterized by tax increases." Ireland experienced miraculous economic growth after cutting spending by an amount equal to 7 percent of GDP (the equivalent of the United States' eliminating two Pentagons' worth of spending) in the late 1980s, then slashing marginal tax rates on profits and capital gains. As an IMF report explained, Ireland also "significantly reduced the exceptionally progressive nature of the progressive tax structure and increased work incentives." By contrast, Japan ran budget deficits that averaged 5.8 percent of GDP from 1993 to 2005, and the economy was stagnant.

In 1997, Christina Romer, Obama's choice to head the Council of Economic Advisers, found that a U.S. tax increase amounting to 1 percent of GDP reduces real GDP by nearly 3 percent within three years, with employment falling 1.1 percent and housing and business investment by 12.6 percent. Explaining the persistence of the damage from tax increases, she suggests "tax changes could have large supply-side effects."

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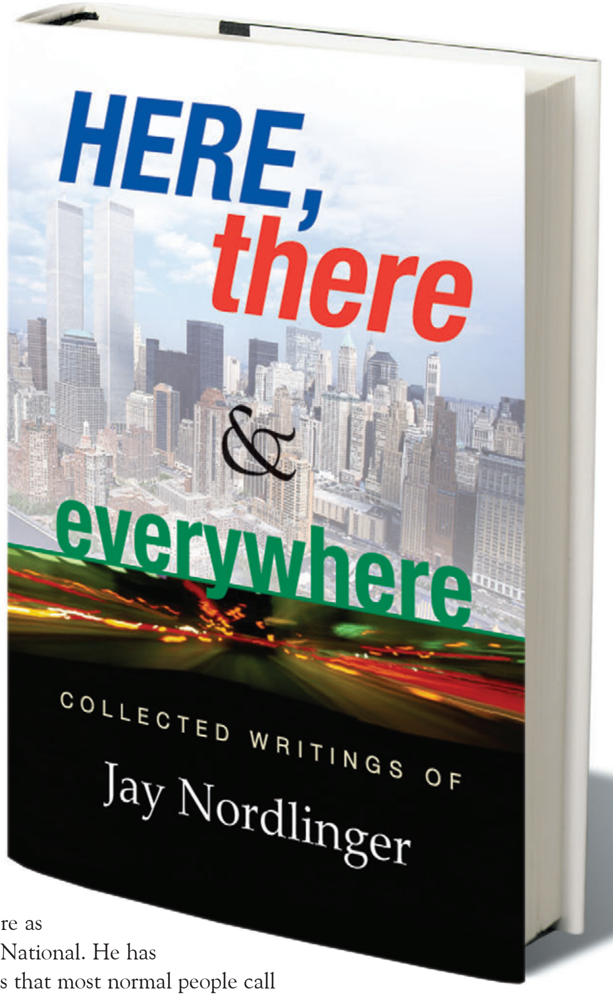

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Confronted with such inconvenient facts, Keynesians spin a different theory. When the economy recovers (as it always does), they say that is because budget deficits stimulate demand. If the economy later slumps, they're likely to say that it is because budget deficits crowd out investment. If the dollar goes up, some Keynesians are sure to argue that budget deficits attract foreign investment. If the dollar goes down, they'll say it's because budget deficits create fears of inflation. If inflation goes up, that will be considered proof that budget deficits are inflationary. If inflation goes down, that just proves budget deficits are not large enough. The answer is always the same; only the questions change.

A theory that can explain everything explains nothing. If Keynesian theorists refuse to accept *any* evidence as contradicting their theory, they are practicing a secular theology, not science.

A dozen years of massive public-works spending in Japan were associated with the weakest economic performance of any major economy of the time. Yet Paul Krugman now speculates that "even in Japan . . . public spending probably prevented a weak economy from plunging into an actual depression." That leaves Keynesians with no *testable* hypothesis. They predicted that more G in Japan would produce *much* more Y, through the magic of multipliers. Whenever their predictions fail, Keynesians insist their theory is correct but reality has gone awry.

WHEN the government spends money, or gives it away in rebate checks, that undoubtedly "stimulates" those who receive the cash. But it has the opposite effect on those who pay the bills. Karl Marx, in his 1852 critique of Louis Bonaparte, explained that "the people are to be given employment: initiation of public works. But the public works increase the people's tax obligations. . . . Taxes are the life source of the bureaucracy. . . . Strong government and heavy taxes are identical."

When the government borrows from Peter to pay Paul, taxpayers then have an obligation either to pay interest to Peter (forever) or to repay the debt. Government money does not become *free* money simply because it was borrowed. True, the U.S. government has been able to borrow at extremely low interest rates lately, but that never lasts for long. The extra debt the new administration plans to dump on the backs of future taxpayers will have to be rolled over at higher interest rates, sooner or later (more likely sooner) and the rising cost of debt service will be borne by taxpayers unless the government defaults (which is already the subject of some speculation).

The CBO estimates that the 2009 budget deficit will be $1.2 trillion, or 8.3 percent of GDP. Obama's "recovery and reinvestment" plan is expected to increase the deficit by $825 billion over two years. Assuming that sum is split evenly between 2009 and 2010, it would raise the estimated deficit to 11.3 percent of GDP this year and 7.6 percent in the following year. And that's not counting another $350 billion for the TARP slush fund.

A deficit of 11.3 percent of GDP would be nearly twice the previous peacetime record of 6 percent, set in 1983. Japan's deficit was nearly as high in 1998, however, reaching 10.7 percent of GDP. Did that jump-start Japan's economy? No, it did not.

The Obama team must not believe their lavish spending plans will do anything useful. They have claimed that spending an extra $825 billion over two years will add or save 3 million jobs. Those had better be terrific jobs, because the cost to taxpayers amounts to $275,000 per job. Why spend so much for so little? Deep recessions are invariably followed by strong recoveries, without gargantuan federal spending schemes. In fact, a 1999 study by Christina Romer showed that the average length of recessions from 1887 to 1929 was 10.3 months—without any Keynesian spending schemes—while the average recession from 1948 to 2000 lasted 10.7 months.

After the 1975 recession, employment grew by 6.2 million jobs in two years and 10.2 million in three. After the 1981–82 recession, employment grew by 5.5 million jobs in two years and 10.1 million in three. The population was much smaller in the past, making Obama's target of 3 or 4 million jobs appear even less ambitious.

Before rushing to add another trillion dollars in TARP and stimulus spending to a deficit already above a trillion, is it too much to ask for some shred of evidence that "fiscal stimulus" ever worked?

Paul Krugman offers only one dubious success story. He says, "The Great Depression in the United States was brought to an end by a massive deficit-financed public works program, known as World War II." But in "What Ended the Great Depression?" Christina Romer found that "monetary developments were very important and fiscal policy was of little consequence. . . . Even in 1942, the year that the economy returned to its trend path, the effects of fiscal policy were small." Sending most young men overseas to fight certainly reduced the unemployment rate, but wartime price controls and rationing exaggerated measures of real income during the war.

What about post-war fiscal policy? Alan Auerbach of the University of California at Berkeley surveyed that topic in 2002, concluding that there is "little evidence these effects [of fiscal policy] have provided a significant contribution to economic stabilization, if in fact they have worked in the right direction at all."

Andrew Mountford of the University of London and Harald Uhlig of the University of Chicago have a new statistical study of the U.S. fiscal experience, "What Are the Effects of Fiscal Policy Shocks?" (It can be found at nber.org.) They compare their results with several of the latest studies, including one co-authored by Romer:

> As with Blanchard and Perotti (2002) we find that investment falls in response to both tax increases and government spending increases and that the multipliers associated with changes in taxes [are] much higher than those associated with a change in spending. This latter result also accords with the analysis of Romer and Romer (2007) who find large effects from exogenous tax changes. . . . Our results . . . are thus more in line with those of Burnside, Eichenbaum and Fisher (2003) who find that private consumption does not change significantly in response to a positive [government] spending shock. . . . The responses of investment, consumption and real wages to a government spending shock are difficult to reconcile with the standard Keynesian approach.

The wonderful Christmas movie *Miracle on 34th Street* appeared a year after Keynes died. In that film Maureen O'Hara says, "Faith is believing in things when common sense tells you not to." To persist in believing today, in innocent defiance of 60 years of experience and data, that Keynes devised a simple, safe, and reliable way to prevent or cure recessions requires that sort of blind faith. Given the Left's antipathy toward faith-based initiatives, it's hard to imagine how Keynesian ideas endure. **NR**

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A writer’s retreat becomes a view of global recession

BY ROB LONG

“I’m sure they told you about the change in the schedule?” the chipper, bearded master of the *Hanjin Miami* asked me as the 90,000-ton container ship eased effortlessly away from its berth in the port of Seattle.

“Change in schedule?” I asked, watching as the gap between ship and land grew from three feet to six feet to too far to jump with luggage. We were supposed to cross the Pacific and arrive in Shanghai in 16 days. And then I was supposed to fly back to California, back to work, to meetings. I had stuff to do.

The ship started to pick up speed. “Is it a big change?” I asked.

“Yes, yes,” he said quickly in his soft German accent—he was busy steering the ship through the thick Seattle fog. “About a week. Maybe more. Hard to say. The global economic slowdown, you know. The front office tells us to slow down and save fuel. So we’ll go to Korea and anchor there.” He turned back to his work.

I looked out into the mist. On the computer desktop in my mind, I clicked on the “Travel Info” folder. Out popped my complicated plans—the hotel in Shanghai, the non-refundable flight back to the United States. I’d have to cancel or change all of these. The lights of Seattle drifted farther away, which meant only one thing to me: I was about to lose my cell coverage.

Steve Jobs, the CEO of Apple, didn’t say this when he introduced the iPhone two years ago, but I’m here to tell you: It’s perfect for those moments when, after the captain of a large container ship tells you that your passage to Shanghai is going to be delayed, you have to frantically log on to Travelocity, send six e-mails notifying people that you’re going to be out of touch for three weeks rather than two, redo your outgoing message, and send four text messages to four different people with the same basic information (“Will B a LOT L8R. Heading out to C.”).

I stood on the flybridge as the lights of the city faded. My phone registered four bars, then three, then two. I kept tapping away, squeezing the last drops of connectivity from the skies.

The master leaned over my shoulder as I was sending a final Twitter message. “One more thing. Terrible weather ahead.”

“Terrible weather?” I asked.

He nodded. “Three major storms ahead. Lots of this—” He swayed vigorously forward and back. “And this—” He swayed vigorously from side to side. “We’ll head north to avoid most of it. I have the computer figuring it out.”

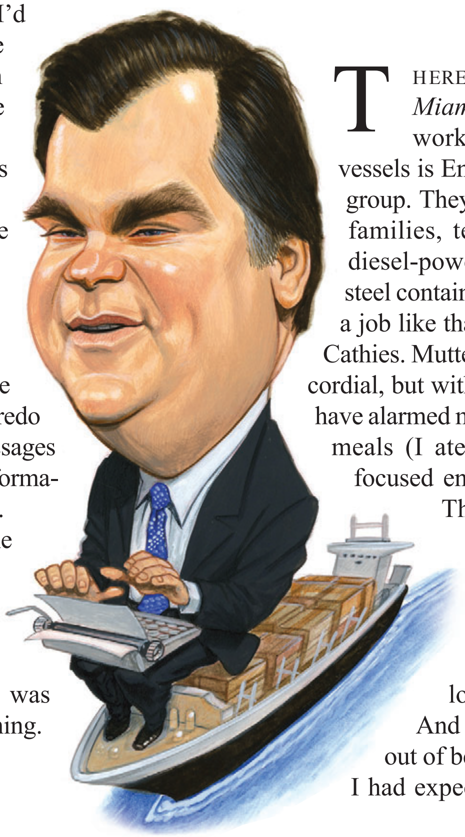
The phone registered “No Service.” The night was dark and wet and cold. I stood out on the flybridge for a while as the coast slipped into blackness. The vastness of the North Pacific stretched out ahead: the fury of three winter storms, the indifferent violence of nature herself. I pulled up the collar on my peacoat and went down to the officer’s mess for meatballs.

Because, you know, you’ve got to eat, right?

Besides, the whole point of my container-ship adventure was to get away from things like cell phones and the Internet. I booked a cabin on the *Hanjin Miami* because I’m a writer; what I’m supposed to do is write. But what I really do is e-mail and have lunch and go to meetings and scribble notes and talk about writing. In other words, I’m not really a writer; I’m *portraying* a writer in a movie called “The Writer Who Goes Broke.” Or something worse, although I’d rather not think about it. I’d rather come up with a different title.

So when I heard that you can book passage on a container ship, I booked it right away. Two weeks of isolation was just what I needed. Toss in another week? Probably a wise idea.

Although there are usually six or seven empty cabins on a container ship of that size, and despite the fact that it’s a pretty economical way to travel, the *Hanjin Miami* hadn’t carried too many passengers. “Why is you on dis boot?” asked the Polish first officer, with a snaggle-toothed, suspicious smile. He was one of those deceptively large men who seem tall at first but then, as you get closer, you realize they’re fat, too. He and I were squeezed into the tiny elevator that connected the nine decks of the *Hanjin Miami*. There wasn’t much oxygen in there for a long answer, so I smiled and said, “I’m a writer.” Enough for him. We rode silently down to the B deck.



ISMAEL ROLDAN

There was a lot of silence on the *Hanjin Miami*. It wasn’t a language problem—the working language aboard most merchant vessels is English. But merchant seamen are an odd group. They spend months at sea, away from their families, tending to what is essentially a giant diesel-powered truck, hauling rows and rows of steel containers back and forth across the ocean, and a job like that somehow doesn’t attract your Chatty Cathies. Mutterers and quiet drinkers, most of them—cordial, but with rich interior lives that I’m sure would have alarmed me if I’d known too much about them. At meals (I ate with the officers), the group had a focused energy and kept the talk to a minimum. The food wasn’t good enough to arrest your attention—it was the kind of fare you’d expect in the dining hall of a third-tier boarding school—so there wasn’t a lot of lingering at the table, spinning tales of the sea. Later, in the lounge, there was purposeful drinking. And then sleep, if you could without rolling out of bed with every pitch and yaw of the ship. I had expected a certain glamour to the crew—a

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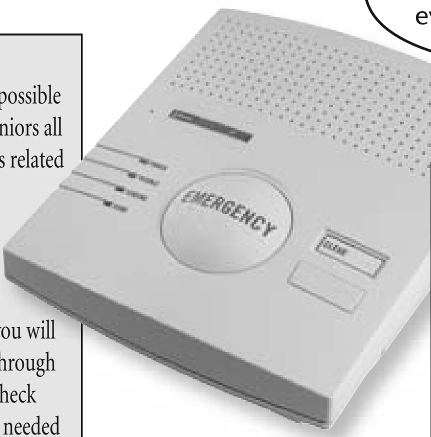

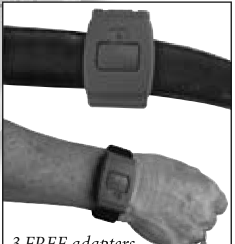

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kind of a Foreign Legion vibe, men on the run from the law or themselves, Bogart types—but that really isn't what efficient international trade requires. What's needed to power and guide vessels like the *Hanjin Miami* are mechanics to keep the engine running, oilers to keep it oiled, and a master to download the appropriate GPS and weather information from the satellite.

And they can probably do it with a lot fewer than that. I spent a couple of days hanging out in the wheelhouse—yes, yes: I did some writing, too—and the big surprise about the wheelhouse is that there's no wheel in it. The big round prop of my imagination has been updated; it's a joystick now, like you'd use to play a video game. After an afternoon watching the master tap a few keys on the computer, check the GPS plotting, and set the joystick to "auto," I ginned up the courage to ask him about all of that technology. "Couldn't this all be done . . ." I asked, and trailed off discreetly.

"Remotely?" he said. "Have someone back in Hamburg guide the whole vessel using the satellite?" He shrugged. "Yes, yes. That will happen in a few years."

He pushed a few more buttons, then looked up. "Of course," he added, "there's no way they could do it without the Filipinos."

And there he had a point. Most of the officers of the *Hanjin Miami* were German—NSB, the company that operates the vessels used by the Korean shipping conglomerate, Hanjin, is German—but the crew is entirely Filipino. And it's the crew that climbs out onto the freezing, slippery deck twice a day to check the lashings on the container stacks. It's the crew that shimmies into the molten interior of the gigantic diesel engine to oil it and check it and keep it rumbling away with a reassuring roar.

A week or so into the crossing, it was time for the safety drills. I tagged along—yes, yes: I did some writing, too—and watched as the officers and crew trudged their way through the fire drill, the abandon-ship drill, and finally the chemical-fire drill. Ships like the *Hanjin Miami* carry a huge array of cargo, and sometimes what's in those steel containers is nasty and prone to explode.

The chemical-fire drill was a simple affair. We all gathered in the crew's mess while the first officer unrolled the giant chemical-firefighting suit. It looked like one of those spacesuits from old science-fiction movies: a neoprene sheath with a plastic-visored helmet.

The first officer held the suit up. "You see here the problem wit the fighting-chemical sweet?" he asked in his Polish accent. "Is too small for a European. Is too short. So, to fight the chemical it will be a Filipino."

The thing was, the suit looked to be about six feet long. In fact, as the officer held it up alongside his own body, it was impossible not to notice that the suit would probably fit him like a glove. Some of the crew noticed this, too. Why is it always the Filipinos, I could hear them thinking, who have to fight the chemical fires?

The officer caught the mood. "Is nowhere that it must be a Filipino. But is a small sweet. So what can it do? It must have a Filipino inside it."

And so he appointed a volunteer—a cheerful Filipino oiler of about five feet—to wade into the suit, which puddled around his legs and middle, making him look like a deflated Malay weather balloon. The crewman gamely walked a few paces before tripping over the folds of the suit, but that was enough to satisfy the international maritime safety requirements for a full drill. Everyone went back to work.

A SHIP the size of the *Hanjin Miami* can haul more than 7,000 containers—each one what they call a TEU, or Twenty-Foot Equivalent Unit—but these days they mostly haul half as many 40- or even 45-foot steel containers, giant shoeboxes that can go pretty effortlessly from ship to railroad to truck trailer. Modern freight transport is the product of a flash of insight by an American trucking magnate named Malcom [*sic*] McLean, who devised a system for loading, unloading, and hauling standardized shipping containers in the 1950s. Until he came along, cargo had to be loaded and unloaded piece by piece. McLean streamlined the process, managed to cut almost 95 percent of the cost of overseas shipping, decimated the stevedores union—you didn't need hundreds of guys anymore; you just needed one in a tall crane—and ushered in the biggest, widest economic boom in history.

If the world is flat, it's not because of the Internet. It's because of shipping companies like Hanjin, which can haul containers filled with tens of thousands of flat-screen TVs from the ports of China to the port of Long Beach, Calif., load the containers onto trucks or trains, and have the flat screens on the shelves of your local Wal-Mart in a few days.

And that's pretty much where the global supply chain peters out. The containers that were stacked so high and deep on the *Hanjin Miami* as we made our stormy way from Seattle to Shanghai were empty. That's what we send back to China: empty containers. They send us extruded plastic doodads and TVs and blue jeans, and we send them empty boxes to refill and resend. They make stuff to wear and use, and we make credit-default swaps.

When the weather got nice, I walked along the outside deck—yes, yes: I did some writing, too; stop nagging me—and looked at the rows and rows of empties. Some weren't empty, of course: The "reefers," or refrigerated units, carried frozen fish and lobster, and one or two of the containers were marked "contains American hay," which is not something I ever thought might be a major export.

But what started as a writer's retreat, a way to trick myself into finishing a troublesome script, became instead a front-row seat to the world's economic slump. America doesn't make; it buys. And when America stops buying, the whole system shuts down. Outside of Shanghai harbor, anchored in a miles-long watery parking lot, were hundreds of container ships waiting for orders, killing time until there was a reason to head into port. If Wal-Mart doesn't expect much demand, the message goes out to the masters of every container ship plying the water between China and the United States: Don't hurry back. So they don't. They sit at anchor and wait for better times.

Three weeks after we left Seattle, I stood on the flybridge of the *Hanjin Miami* on a bright morning as she steamed into Shanghai harbor. My iPhone buzzed and beeped and deposited dozens of e-mails and text messages and voice-mail notices. The script was finished. I had even begun a new one.

"Maybe I'll see you again, on another crossing," I said to the master, as we shook hands near the gangway.

"If there is another crossing," he replied. The cranes began to lift the containers from the ship and set them aside, for later. **NR**

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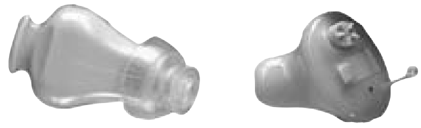

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The Long View

BY ROB LONG

MEMORANDUM

April 20, 2009

TO: All Huffington Post (paid) contributors
FROM: Arianna
RE: The Olbermann accident & a medical & mental-health benefits clarification

Dear Team:

I'm writing this to you on board Bob Pittman's G5, so please excuse any typos!!

Now, on a serious note: Our hearts and prayers are with our friends at MSNBC and the entire Olbermann family at this time. It was and is a devastating shock to all of us, and I know that we're all processing the events of yesterday in our own unique ways.

As it happened, I was in the green room watching the monitor when Keith's head exploded. He was trying to explain to his viewers how President Obama's use of FISA-allowed wiretaps was fundamentally different from former and unindicted President Bush's use of FISA-allowed wiretaps when, according to medical examiners, his brain simply burst under the pressure, resulting in what doctors call *cranial auto-detonation*.

Needless to say, my segment was postponed.

The Olbermann tragedy, coupled with Katie Couric's Obama Tax Cut–induced stroke last month and Andrew Sullivan's nervous breakdown and subsequent institutionalization in February after President Obama declined to shut down the prison in Guantanamo Bay, means it's imperative that we take a moment to clarify the medical-benefits package that Huffington Post (paid) contributors currently enjoy.

Believe me, this was all a lot easier when I started the HuffPo. Back then, we didn't pay *anyone* for *anything*, which made figuring out employee benefits a snap. We didn't offer any! But with Katie in a vegetative state, Andrew painting daffodils on a padded cell wall with his own feces, and Keith completely exploded, I guess it's time to face the facts: The Obama administration is going to take a deep and severe toll on the mental and physical health of the progressive Left.

So now, as with any organization experiencing rapid growth and a high valuation, we've got to figure out what, exactly, we're covering and what we're not. We owe our (paid) contributors a clarification.

In the past 90 days, the number of employees putting in mental-health-related claims has soared. There are now 31 employees taking two or more anti-psychotic medications daily, with the majority of our IT staff subsisting on the anti-anxiety/anti-depressant medications Paxil and Zoloft.

In addition, the number of employee sick days has dramatically increased. Some of our (paid) contributors are reporting extreme neck and muscle strain, as they try to contort themselves into postures that allow them to maintain a joyful enthusiasm for President Obama's new administration despite its similarities to the administration of former and unindicted President Bush.

Next week, the Obama administration is planning a Rose Garden celebration marking our nation's victory in Iraq. "Mission Accomplished! Thanks, Heroes of the Surge!" is sure to be a difficult and trying time for most of us—well, not for me so much; I'll be there waving the flag!!—but it's also important to understand that the wonderful, uncritical, over-the-top enthusiasm for Barack Obama is considered by our medical insurance providers to be a *preexisting condition* and is therefore *not covered* under our current schedule of benefits.

I wish I could deliver better news, but our bootstrap, startup project simply couldn't afford to extend to our (paid) contributors coverage of these kinds of reactions. We simply cannot afford to lower the prescription-drug co-pay to make the anti-anxiety and anti-depressant medications that many of you find necessary more affordable.

What I can do, and will do starting tomorrow, is offer the use of my personal massage therapist to all (paid) contributors for a reduced rate (chair-style massage ONLY) until we've all adjusted to the realities of the new administration.

It's jarring, I know, to suddenly feel compelled to defend policies that are remarkably similar—if not identical—to the policies of former and unindicted President Bush, and I certainly feel for you as you tie yourselves into rhetorical knots with your friends and family—and as you make desperate rationalizations to yourself in the mirror—trying to explain just how radically different, say, the Department of Defense is when led by Secretary of Defense Robert Gates under President Obama from the way it was when led by Secretary of Defense Robert Gates under former and unindicted President Bush.

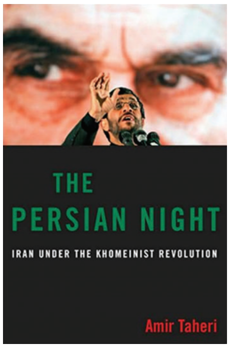
But I think there's a lesson for all of us in Keith's exploded head. That, along with Katie's stroke and Andrew's daffodils, reminds us that the world is a complicated and surprising place. Personally, I don't have any trouble at all reconciling my past beliefs or enthusiasms with those of my present. As far as I'm concerned, it's all one wonderful continuum. As I said once to Newt Gingrich years and years ago (or was it Al Gore? no matter), the thing about the past is, with enough money, you can make it go away. I hope that's of some comfort to our (paid) contributors.

All the best,
Arianna

Books, Arts & Manners

A Tour of Unreality

DAVID PRYCE-JONES



The Persian Night: Iran under the Khomeinist Revolution, by Amir Taheri (Encounter, 300 pp., $25.95)

Present-day Iran is a glaring example of the human propensity to do harm in the belief that one is doing good. The country has been hijacked and shaken out of its course by people with a claim to a vision of perfection. Self-righteous ideologues, they are like others of the kind in other countries at other times: Their true goal is absolute power. What sets the Iranians apart is that they are Shiites, a minority within Islam with a specific doctrine stating that an imam in the 10th century went into hiding and that mankind has to convert to Islam, whereupon the Hidden Imam will return and usher in the end of days.

Today's regime in Iran believes that this messianic vision is about to be fulfilled. Unbelievers—in other words, Christians and Jews—cannot be allowed to stand in the way. Even more problematically, within Islam itself Shiites are outnumbered about ten to one by Sunnis, and these too have to be brought into line. The pursuit of power in the name of Islam is driving the regime to develop and test weaponry, including long-range missiles and what is suspected from the available evidence to be a nuclear bomb. This threat to the world order is as sudden as it is unexpected, with a quality of hallucination about it, as if reality itself were going off the rails.

In the course of centuries, indeed millennia, Iran has experienced many ups and downs, but always managed to preserve its independence, and its identity and culture as well. Successive shahs were in the quandary of having to decide whether to modernize, and if so, how to carry it through—in other words, what accommodation to make to the ways of the West and unbelievers in general. At several levels of the society there was always a retrograde reaction to any change that seemed to be surrendering to outside influences, and an obscure and obscurantist cleric, Ayatollah Khomeini, made himself the leader of a campaign against Westernization. Seizing power in 1979, he remodeled the state into a Shiite Islamic dictatorship. His hold on absolute power could only generate violence and a clash of civilizations. He did not object to being seen as another Prophet, perhaps even the Hidden Imam.

Saddam Hussein, the Ayatollah's Iraqi and Sunni neighbor and rival, was quick to go to war against an Iran that had hit upon a new guise for ancient ethnic and doctrinal prejudices. The eventual American overthrow of Saddam Hussein dramatically changed the balance of forces throughout the Middle East. Occupying a position of military strength right next to Iran, the United States became the effective regional power, and the main obstacle to Shiite imperialism. Today's leaders of Iran bitterly resent what they see as an American check on their ambitions and nothing less than a repudiation of their whole vision of the future. In response, they regularly forecast the coming decline and fall of the United States, and for good measure the elimination of the state of Israel as well; they speechify and mount huge demonstrations to impress on everyone that for the sake of Islam they are about to deliver the promised apocalypse. The worst of it is that most of these ruling clerics are genuine ideologues and not cynics; they really mean what they say and do.

Written in sorrow rather than anger, *The Persian Night* clearly and calmly describes Iran's descent into unreality. It is a masterwork of information and argument. Formerly editor of Iran's most influential paper, Amir Taheri is now perforce an exile but he remains in touch with all sorts of insiders. In addition to his native Farsi he is fluent in Arabic and the main European languages. Frequent quotations from Persian poetry, old or contemporary, reveal his love of his native country and its culture, but he is equally likely to make good use of Plato and Cicero, Hobbes and Goethe, or even Frantz Fanon to illustrate a point. More than ironic, it seems outright improbable that one and the same Iran could be home to ignorant bigots like Ayatollah Khomeini and his successors—in particular the vicious and narrow-minded president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad—and a sophisticated humanist like Taheri.

Many people, especially on the left, have contributed to falsifying the true nature of events in Iran. Andrew Young, the American ambassador to the United Nations in the Carter years, thought Khomeini was a "saint." Opinion-makers such as Edward Said and Michel Foucault praised Iran for its anti-Americanism. Long after the grim facts spoke for themselves, Bill Clinton could make the preposterous assertion that Iran was "the only country where progressive ideas enjoy a vast constituency"—this at a time when men were obliged to grow supposedly Islamic beards and the slogan "Death to Those Who Shave" appeared on walls.

Taheri has the figures for the victims of this regime: At least 100,000 people have been executed, among them 300 mullahs. Death squads from Tehran have killed 127 dissidents abroad in 16 countries including the United States. Over the past three decades, some 120 women have been stoned to death on charges of adultery, and women who have suffered rape have also been sentenced to death or prison. According to the chief Islamic prosecutor, in 2007 alone over 400 people were executed, while another 150, including five women, were due to be

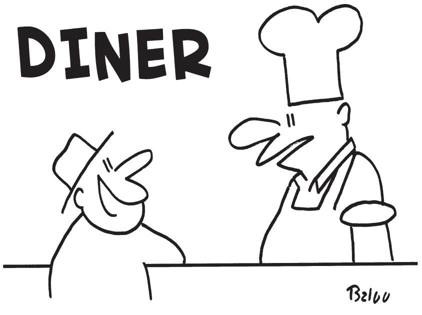
Mr. Pryce-Jones, an NR senior editor, is author of The Closed Circle: An Interpretation of the Arabs.

hanged or stoned. By now more than 5 million Iranians—somewhere between 5 and 10 percent of the population—have been imprisoned for varying lengths of time in this replica of the Gulag.

But Iran is much more than a classic Muslim despotism. The Iranian state has been transformed into a permanent revolution. At the head of it is a Supreme Leader, and all institutions and laws have been arranged to give him unrestrained power to pursue Shiite imperialism. Here is a one-party system. Elections are manipulated. Freedom of speech exists only within agreed limits. So-called Revolutionary Guard and other paramilitary units control the population with whatever violent means are required. Superstitions are encouraged, including a cult of death and martyrdom. For Taheri, this is fascism pure and simple, and he does not hesitate to say so. Mimesis is in operation: Men who ostensibly repudiate all things Western in fact are copying and practicing a malign totalitarian doctrine that originated in the West.

"Killing is the same as mercy," Khomeini wrote. A favorite dictum of his was "To kill and be killed are the supreme duties of Muslims." He also liked to say that war is a "divine blessing." That was the point of departure for the transformation of the state into a cause, which according to Taheri dates to a conference of Islamists in Sudan in 1993. At the time, the collapse of the Soviet Union was taken as evidence that God was indeed making Muslims masters of the world. The turn of the United States had now come.

To prepare for jihad and mass mobilization, the ayatollahs had to manufacture multiple fears and hatreds—notably of women, the U.S., and Israel, all reduced to stereotypes that bear no relation to reality. Taheri points out, usefully, that the ayatollahs and Ahmadinejad do not have enemies with whom it might be possible to compromise; they have foes who have to be conquered and subdued. No other approach will do. It follows that the proposals of negotiation floating around Washington are nothing but illusion, arising from failure to understand the Iranian cause and its fascist ideology.



"How's your liver?" *"Okay for now, but my doctor told me to take it easy."*

There is hopeful news, however. It is a fantasy—pure pretense—for Iran to be casting itself as the foremost Islamic power and seeking a new world order shaped by Islam. Universal jihad on Iranian lines would involve the submission of Sunnis to Shiite leadership and example, and also threaten the existence of Muslim nation-states, many of which have fought for their independence within living memory.

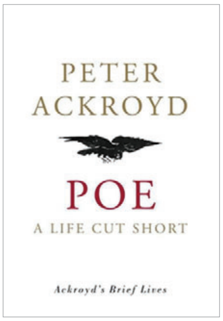
And more besides. Iranians know perfectly well that they are victimized by those claiming to be acting on their behalf. The man in the street understands that the U.S. befriended Iran in the past and would willingly do so again, and to call it the "great Satan" is mere fascist sloganeering. Similarly, the popular perception of Jews tends to be positive and does not correspond to Ahmadinejad's raving about Israel as a "dead rat" and a "cancerous tumor." Women do not accept subordination. Workers demand rights. Minorities are close to armed revolt. Nationalism is likely to prove strong enough for a return to the conventional nation-state. The conditions and the timing for regime change, Taheri maintains, seem right.

The alternative is a war—with the U.S., Israel, or both. Khomeini's hateful prescription that Muslims have a duty to kill or be killed would then be substantiated. Such a calamity would leave a permanent scar on mankind. Taheri raises the prospect of a Western preemptive strike against Iran's nuclear facilities, but does not discuss what the consequences might be—a rare omission in this comprehensive account of today's most urgent crisis.

In the old days of the Cold War, brave spirits used to write books that came to grips with the ideological monstrosity of the Soviet Union. They too had no choice but to publish in the West. In the end, they were vindicated. Honor now goes to *The Persian Night* for exposing the ideological monstrosity of Iran. **NR**

Into the Abyss

JAMES E. PERSON JR.


PETER ACKROYD

POE

A LIFE CUT SHORT

Ackroyd's Brief Lives

Poe: A Life Cut Short,
by Peter Ackroyd
(Nan A. Talese, 224 pp., $21.95)

EMERSON and the New England Transcendentalists loftily professed to know nothing much about evil, that hoary idea from the childhood of the race. But a noted contemporary of the "Frog-Pondians" (as he called them), Edgar Allan Poe, knew much about evil in man and in nature: the labyrinthine passages of self-deception, the human capacity for tormenting others, the horror of death, and the greater horror of the dead who yet walk.

Among the great imaginative writers of the 19th century, it is Poe (1809–49) and Nathaniel Hawthorne, with their knowledge of man's mixed nature and deepest fears, whose works often reach the modern reader most effectively. Even today, students read and (more important) remember such stories as "The Tell-Tale Heart," "The Cask of Amontillado," and "The Fall of the House of Usher," as well as the poem most closely associated with Poe (to the point that it became the poet's sobriquet), "The Raven." "He is the greatest exponent of fantasy fiction in the English language, because he manages to touch upon the most universal or deeply rooted fears," claims Peter

Mr. Person is the author of Russell Kirk: A Critical Biography of a Conservative Mind *and* Earl Hamner: From Walton's Mountain to Tomorrow.

Ackroyd in the most recent biography of the Raven, published to coincide with the bicentennial of his birth.

Biographer of (among others) Shakespeare, Newton, and T. S. Eliot, Ackroyd has chosen a challenging subject in Poe. For while Poe the writer is renowned as the founder of the modern detective story (with "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" and "The Purloined Letter") and father of the literary Gothic in America, Poe the man is often viewed in a less favorable light. He is widely perceived as a creepy mad genius, not terribly different from the over-the-edge narrators of his stories. This reputation is largely the result of two things: Poe's physical appearance as captured in a small number of portraits—those burning eyes, the enormous brow, the slightly out-of-balance face—as well as a calculated smear campaign instigated by Poe's literary executor, an ambitious minor poet named Rufus Wilmot Griswold.

Much of the history of Poe's reputation for the past century and a half has involved acts of shaking off these distractions to reveal the man within; as late as 1923, three-quarters of a century after Poe's death, H. L. Mencken claimed that Poe had never had a competent biographer. Several solid works have appeared in the years since, the best being Kenneth Silverman's magisterial *Edgar A. Poe: Mournful and Never-ending Remembrance* (1991). Ackroyd's *Poe: A Life Cut Short* seeks to present in shorter form a straightforward account of Poe. In doing so Ackroyd attempts to put some distance between the facts of Poe's life and Griswold's assertions (which he calls "the most lethal character assassination in the history of American literature"), to provide a clear picture of the man and how he became one of the most widely influential American authors of his era.

Ackroyd's work is intended as a pocket guide to the chronological facts of Poe's life, the mystery of his death, and the nature of his literary genius. The biographer is quite successful in reaching the first two goals, less so with the third. For at the end of the book, the reader comes away wondering how on earth Poe—stumbling from one drunken binge to the next, cadging money from friends, squandering what little money fell into his hands, moving his place of lodging repeatedly and into ever-lower circumstances—found time to write the myriad short stories, poems, and critical reviews he completed, and to do so with such brilliance and bursts of wisdom.

Through the life he led, Poe became the prototype of the tormented, self-absorbed artist so tiresomely common within Western culture in the years since his death: misunderstood by the unthinking herd and not bound by the rules by which other men live. But as Ackroyd demonstrates, Poe was far from misunderstood by his contemporaries. In fact, he was acclaimed as America's greatest writer during his lifetime, and those who knew him understood him all too well—as both a remarkable writer and a relentless liar who made up "stretchers" about his history and accomplishments, as well as a scoundrel who betrayed every man who ever befriended or trusted him. His strange death in Baltimore—Poe was found outside a saloon wearing clothes not his own, muttering cryptic remarks, semi-conscious from either drink, drugs, exhaustion, illness, a serious beating, or a combination of the above, and then died before the truth of his condition could be discovered—was somehow fitting for a man intent on playing a self-imposed tragic role. "He was a congenital fabulist," writes Ackroyd, "a mendacity that suggests insecurity and pride in equal measure."

These characteristics seem to have arisen from Poe's earliest years. Born in Boston to a struggling family of actors, and raised in Richmond, Va., Poe was abandoned by his hard-drinking father, David Poe, and then, at age three, orphaned by the death of his tubercular mother, Eliza. He was adopted and raised to adulthood by a well-off merchant family, the Allans. Despite his Northern heritage, Poe considered himself a Southerner and a Virginia gentleman (however imperfectly he played the role) all his life: gallant with women, comfortable with the Old South's caste system, and resentful of the North's cultural dominance. He also was forever drawn to young, dying women, pathetically seeking a substitute for his departed mother and his kind stepmother (who died when he was a young adult). From an early age, thanks in part to brooding on his mother's death and ghostly tales he heard from the Allan family's servants, he was drawn to cemeteries, to

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gloom and the fearful. Ackroyd records a story of Poe's boyhood in which the lad was driven past a log cabin surrounded by graves, at the sight of which he abruptly screamed, "They will run after us and drag me down!"

His entire life became a fascinated gaze into the abyss, and an attempt not to be swept into it. He would entertain, but then thwart, the imp of the perverse. (In his story "A Descent into the Maelström," the narrator both admires the deadly whirlpool into which his ship has been swept and takes practical action to escape it, eventually ascending to the ocean's surface after lashing himself to a barrel.)

Through Ackroyd we learn that the circumstances of his subject's life are intimately interwoven with his work, and that Poe's 40 years were cut short not by madness, as Griswold suggested in a scurrilous obituary notice at the time, but by the man's addictions, obsessions, and self-destructive choices. Poe became a binge drinker and a spendthrift in his mid-teens, during his single year at the University of Virginia; and for the rest of his life his behavior followed a fairly predictable pattern: When sober, he was industrious, charming, and courteous; when drunk, he was irascible, irresponsible, and mean as a snake. Insanity may have played some role in Poe's downfall, but it was the strong drink that was decisive.

At times, Ackroyd seems unsure of his terrain. At one point he describes Poe as "the most calculating of authors, never to be confused with his disturbed and even psychotic narrators," but elsewhere he speaks of the horror of Poe's morbid despair and says, "Poe's personality resembles the apparent calmness of the frenzied narrators of his stories."

The biographer is entirely on target, however, in his capsule assessments of Poe's accomplishments as a poet and short-story writer. And to his credit, Ackroyd gives Poe his due as a critic, describing him as possessing "a fine critical mind tempered with satire and mordant wit," which he wielded like a whip of scorpions on some of the most respected books and authors of his age. He once stated that as a reviewer he would never put up with what he could put down—words with which Mencken might have heartily concurred. But as Ackroyd also notes, Poe also overpraised certain authors—particularly female poets he longed to ensnare romantically; and his ill-considered war of words against Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was borderline libelous, with Poe dismissing Longfellow in lectures and reviews as a mere adapter of other poets' works, and even an outright plagiarist. (Longfellow's chief sins, actually, were those of being a Northerner and being widely recognized as America's greatest poet of the day, garnering praise that grated against Poe's vanity.)

Longfellow never responded to Poe's accusations. After Poe's death he praised his tormentor as "a man so richly endowed with genius," adding: "The harshness of his criticisms I have never attributed to anything but the irritation of a sensitive nature chafed by some indefinite sense of wrong." That sensitive nature is brought to life in all its sadness, rashness, triumph, and doom in Ackroyd's short biography. **NR**

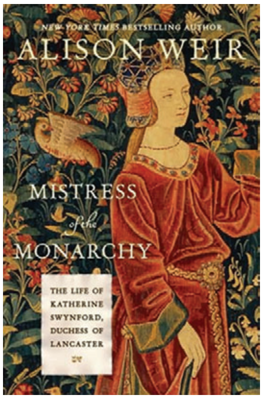
ONE OF THOSE MOMENTS

Near sundown, on a day in early spring,
A sudden radiance in a shadowed street.
Soft, breathing trees—the airy spheres of foliage
Take on a tender valedictory light.
I look a long time as the dark comes on—
One of those moments when life seems complete.
Even in the dusk I feel the afterglow.
A single bird, a mockingbird, takes flight.

—ROBERT MEZEY

Mother Of Her Country

FLORENCE KING


NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR
ALISON WEIR
MISTRESS
of the
MONARCHY
THE LIFE OF KATHERINE SWYNFORD, DUCHESS OF LANCASTER

Mistress of the Monarchy: The Life of Katherine Swynford, Duchess of Lancaster, by Alison Weir (Ballantine, 416 pp., $28)

THE moist glow of overcome pilgrims is unmistakable. The residents of Lincoln, England, are used to seeing them trudge up the steep hill to Lincoln Cathedral to examine yellowed parchment records containing the name "Katherine Swynford," get tickets to Katherine Swynford Study Days, join the Katherine Swynford Society, and take part in special ceremonies each year on May 10, such as, in 2003, the planting of a memorial tree on the 600th anniversary of Katherine Swynford's death. Most of all, they want to gaze in awe at the tomb of Katherine Swynford herself. And often, as your reviewer did, they will murmur almost prayerfully, "Katherine . . . Katherine."

All tourists visit the royal tombs in Westminster Abbey where the kings and queens are laid to rest, but why would anyone travel up to the English Midlands in search of a mere duchess? What causes these Elvis-like pilgrimages? The answer is found on the sign that Lincoln Cathedral has placed on Katherine Swynford's tomb: "This is the Katherine of Anya Seton's famous novel."

Back in the 1950s, Anya Seton’s runaway bestsellers based on historical figures made her one of America’s favorite authors of popular fiction. No mere bodice-ripper, she was known as much for her scrupulous research as for her sexy (for the times) love scenes. When *Katherine* came out in 1954, Seton’s vast readership ate it up, mesmerized by its romantic sweep and titillating sensuality. Set in late medieval England, it’s the story of the long love affair and eventual marriage of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, son of Edward III, and Katherine Roet, daughter of a Flemish herald.

Like all of us who first read *Katherine* in our teen years, the English historian Alison Weir, author of the present biography, was enchanted by it and says it still has the power to move her, but she confesses that she also found it frustrating because she always wanted to know more about the heroine, who is “famous, but paradoxically, little known.”

Alison Weir’s most impressive piece of detective work will crush romantics, but she makes a convincing case that the rumors about how John of Gaunt died were true.

Part of the paradox might be that, unlike most royal mistresses, Katherine Swynford was neither a pathological intriguer nor a shopaholic, and so history let her alone. Consequently, what little we know about her personal life can be quickly summed up.

She was born around 1350 and married a Lincolnshire knight, Sir Hugh Swynford, by whom she had at least three children.

Her sister, Philippa, married Geoffrey Chaucer.

She became John of Gaunt’s mistress around 1371 while serving as governess to his three “true-born” children by his deceased first wife.

In the 1370s, while he was married to his second wife, Katherine had four “base-born” children—John, Henry, Thomas, and Joan—by John of Gaunt, who acknowledged them and gave them the surname “Beaufort.”

In 1381 she and John suddenly ended their relationship and lived apart for many years.

On January 13, 1396, when they were 45 and 55, she and John were married in Lincoln Cathedral, after which their four base-born children were legitimized by the pope.

Seton sticks to these facts but gilds the lily where a novelist must. She makes Katherine a raving beauty and describes her in detail, though we have no idea what she looked like: No likeness, no description exists. The monks who wrote the abbey chronicles castigated her as “a she-devil and an enchantress,” so clearly she was a babe, but they recorded no particulars, perhaps because dwelling on them would have violated their vows. Nor are illustrations and drawings any help. The medieval world portrayed people as types—the Knight, the Noblewoman, the Serf—human chess pieces with no distinguishing individual characteristics.

Like a lawyer thwarted of factual proof, Weir goes after circumstantial evidence. Reasoning that if the children of John and Katherine did not have their father’s famously Plantagenet features—narrow face, long thin nose, blond hair, and blue eyes—they very likely took after their mother. She hunted down carvings and brass representations of the four bastards, making some headway with tomb effigies before she finally hit paydirt: a later-15th-century painting by Jan van Eyck, a portrait of a cardinal who is thought by art historians to be Henry Cardinal Beaufort.

Katherine’s second bastard took holy orders, and thanks to royal influence was named Bishop of Lincoln at the age of just 21. Shown here as an older man, he was clearly no Plantagenet. His darker, heavier Flemish side is uppermost; his eyes are brown, his face is wide, and his nose is fleshy. If John of Gaunt looked like lean, blond Peter O’Toole, we might imagine Katherine as brunette and buxom Jean Simmons.

Weir’s most impressive piece of detective work will crush romantics, but she makes a convincing case that the rumors about how John of Gaunt died were true. He supposedly had a venereal disease that caused “putrefaction of the genitals”; as he lay dying, in 1399, he showed them to his nephew, Richard II. The indefatigable Weir finds evidence for this in, of all places, a stained-glass window in York Cathedral. It shows a kneeling John, with a prayer book before him open to Psalm 38. The first verse of the psalm is a conventional invocation, but if we read on, says Weir, we come to verse 5: “My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness.” Then verse 7: “For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease.”

Weir’s most disappointing finding is the coolness between Katherine and her brother-in-law, Geoffrey Chaucer. In Seton’s novel they are great friends, but they apparently saw little of each other and maintained somewhat of an armed truce. Chaucer broke it once in “The Physician’s Tale” when he wrote that governesses with a scandalous past were like “poachers turned gamekeepers,” clearly an allusion to her position as governess of the Lancastrian children. Weir never quite settles on the reason for Chaucer’s coolness, but if he did dislike Katherine, he was the exception that proved the rule. Everyone else adored her; Henry IV, John’s oldest true-born son, called her “the King’s mother” in royal decrees, and even the paranoid Richard II liked her.

Katherine’s greatest importance to England can be discovered without recourse to circumstantial evidence. Just find her name on a genealogical chart and run your finger down her line until you come to her two dynastically significant Beaufort bastards, John and Joan. Then run your finger down their lines until you come to someone who needs no introduction.

THE NATIONAL REVIEW

KARL ROVE Joins All-Star Lineup!

2009 Mediterranean Cruise

Join KARL ROVE, JOHN BOLTON, DICK MORRIS, GEORGE GILDER, TONY BLANKLEY, CAL THOMAS, PETE DU PONT, RICH LOWRY, KATHRYN LOPEZ, FR. ROBERT SIRICO, JAY NORDLINGER, JOHN O'SULLIVAN, RAMESH PONNURU, CHRISTINA SOMMERS, JOHN HILLEN, KATE O'BEIRNE, JASON STEORTS, and SALLY SATEL as we visit

Rome, Dubrovnik, Corfu, Katakolon, Santorini, Ephesus, Piraeus, and Messina

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DAY/DATE	PORT	ARRIVE/DEPART	SPECIAL EVENT
Wed/July 8	Rome/Civitavecchia	5PM	
Thur/July 9	AT SEA		morning, afternoon seminars evening cocktail reception
Fri/July 10	Dubrovnik, Croatia	8AM-6PM	late-night smoker
Sat/July 11	Corfu, Greece	8AM-6PM	
Sun/July 12	Katakolon, Greece	7AM-2PM	afternoon seminar evening cocktail reception
Mon/July 13	Santorini, Greece	8AM-9PM	
Tue/July 14	Ephesus, Turkey	7AM-7PM	"night owl" session
Wed/July 15	Piraeus, Greece	8AM-6PM	"night owl" session
Thur/July 16	AT SEA		morning, afternoon seminars late-night smoker
Fri/July 17	Messina, Sicily	7AM-2PM	afternoon seminar evening cocktail reception
Sat/July 18	Rome/Civitavecchia	7AM	

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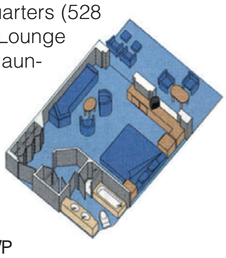

Category SA

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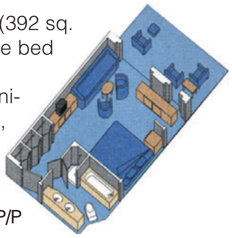

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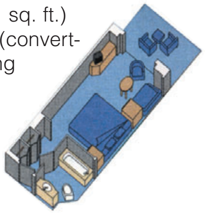

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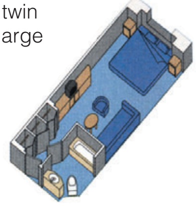

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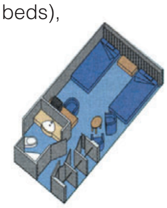

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DAY 1: You arrive in beautiful **ROME** (why not explore the Eternal City via an affordable pre-cruise tour package?) and then head to Civitavecchia to board the luxurious *Noordam*. ♐ ♐ ♐ **DAY 2:** Rested and ready, today you're "at sea" and enjoying the stimulating discussions of politics and policy at two *NR* seminars, and *then* start the evening with a bang at our inaugural cocktail reception. ♐ ♐ ♐ **DAY 3:** This place of ancient streets lined with stone palaces, Venetian-style buildings, and bell towers, **DUBROVNIK** is enclosed by famed massive stone walls. May we suggest a leisurely walk atop them to savor a great view of a great city and the sea? Back aboard the *Noordam* tonight: a fun-filled late-night smoker featuring complimentary cognac and world-class cigars from **H. Upmann**. *Now* we're smokin'. ♐ ♐ ♐ **DAY 4:** With its unique scenery featuring gentle green hills and luxuriant southern flora, **CORFU** is one of the most beautiful of all Greek islands, blessed by a mild climate, calm blue-green waters, rugged mountains, hidden coves, and miles of sandy beaches. ♐ ♐ ♐ **DAY 5:** The morning starts in **KATAKOLON**, the fishing village that serves as gateway to Olympia, the great Panhellenic sanctuary, and site of the ancient games—situated at the foot of wooded Mount Kronos. This is an ideal place for an excursion into antiquity. Back to modern times on the *Noordam* in the afternoon, you'll enjoy our third *NR* panel session and our second fun-filled cocktail reception—a prelude to yet another sumptuous gourmet dinner. ♐ ♐ ♐ **DAY 6:** *Oopa!* Every-thing that has made the Greek islands legendary can be experienced today, on glorious **SANTORINI**—sun-bleached white houses, fertile vineyards and small Orthodox churches, cobblestone streets and cafes known for strong libations. Its 13 villages demand your exploration! ♐ ♐ ♐ **DAY 7:** On to Turkey, and a full day starting in **KUSADASI**, gateway to ancient **EPHESUS**, the country's most important archaeological site, dating back to the 10th century BC. Along a white marble road grooved by ancient chariot wheels, the two-story Library of Celsus presents a striking sight, as do the Hadrian's Temple, the ancient Great Theatre, and of course the Virgin Mary's House, where Jesus's Mother lived her last years. As we sail away, dinner will be followed by an enjoyable *NR* "Night Owl" session, where policy and mirth mix. ♐ ♐ ♐ **DAY 8:** Today we're back to Greece, stopping at **PIRAEUS**, portal to a world of wonders: Athens, the Acropolis, the Parthenon, Plaka, Corinth—a full day to become immersed in history. As we approach the wee hours: more *NR* "Night Owl" glee is in store. ♐ ♐ ♐ **DAY 9:** Time for an excursion respite on this "at sea" day, which means another morning and afternoon panel-session doubleheader with our guest speakers and editors, and our second late-night **H. Upmann** poolside smoker. *Buona notte!* ♐ ♐ ♐ **DAY 10:** You'll need the sleep because we arrive early in Siciliy, in gorgeouos **MESSINA**—from the stunning old city and its beaten paths (be sure you see the Cathedral!) to visits to Taormina, where the ancient Greco-Roman Theater is a gem, you'll be saying *mama mia!* That afternoon, enjoy the final seminar and our goodbye cocktail reception. ♐ ♐ ♐ **DAY 11:** Yes, we said *10* days, but we won't officially count this melancholy one as the *Noordam* brings you and wondrous memories back to Civitavecchia in the morning. *Arrivederci!*

Running one’s finger down these lines was a frequent activity during the Wars of the Roses, when Katherine had a dog in every fight. In 1485, when Henry Tudor claimed the throne for the House of Lancaster, the Yorkist Richard III issued a proclamation charging that Henry “was descended of bastard blood. . . . He is son unto Margaret Beaufort, who was daughter unto John Beaufort, Duke of Somerset, who was son unto John Beaufort, Earl of Somerset, who was son unto Dame Katherine Swynford, and of her in double adultery begotten, whereby it evidently appeareth that no title can or may be in him.”

Henry Tudor could have replied in a proclamation of his own that Richard III and his dead brother Edward IV were sons unto Cecily Neville, who was daughter unto Joan Beaufort, who was daughter unto the same Dame Katherine Swynford—Richard’s own great-grandmother.

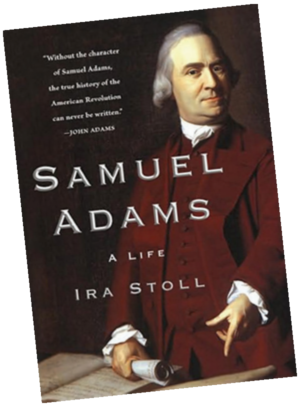
Henry Tudor, Katherine’s great-great-grandson, ascended the throne as Henry VII, but Katherine wasn’t finished yet. John Beaufort had a daughter, also named Joan, who married James I, King of Scots. By the time the line got to James VI, England’s Elizabeth I, Katherine’s great-great-great-great-granddaughter, had died childless, and so James VI inherited the English throne as James I of the House of Stuart. After the Stuarts—

Did I just hear you say that the German-speaking House of Hanover couldn’t possibly have any connection to Katherine? Guess again. A granddaughter of James I married the Elector of Hanover and produced a son named George . . . and you know the rest. The present-day British royal family are all descendants of Katherine, and there appears to be a genetic throwback among them: Prince William looks so Plantagenet that he could play John of Gaunt in a movie.

Alison Weir has written a magnificent book that illustrates what historical research can achieve when done by the right person. There is a hard-nosed detective under the graceful stylist, and a bloodhound who leaves no scent unturned. Best of all, she has given us Katherine again, less girlish than Anya Seton’s, but still able to reach down the centuries and make us fall in love with her once more. **NR**

Righteous Rebel

ALAN PELL CRAWFORD


“Without the character of Samuel Adams, the true history of the American Revolution can never be written.”
—JOHN ADAMS
SAMUEL ADAMS
A LIFE
IRA STOLL

Samuel Adams: A Life,
by Ira Stoll (Free Press,
352 pp., $28)

When, in April 1775, Paul Revere set off from Boston to Lexington, his main mission was not, as generations of schoolchildren once were taught, to “spread the alarm through every Middlesex village and farm.” That Revere did, though his most urgent task was to warn two individuals that British troops were on the move. The two whom Revere was told the British wanted to seize (and most likely hang) were John Hancock and Samuel Adams.

These names remain familiar today, though if most Americans do not know quite who they were and what they did, this is not Longfellow’s fault. John Hancock is an insurance company. Paul Revere makes tableware. In the Midwest, he operates pizza joints promising “Revolutionary Home Delivery.” Sam Adams is a beer marketed to frat boys—odd, considering the upright character of this most pious of Bostonians.

Ira Stoll, in his well-researched biography *Samuel Adams*, does an admirable job reminding us just who this indispensable man was, what contribution he made to this country, and why the British wanted him dead. When George III, in July 1774, asked Thomas Hutchinson, the last royal governor of Massachusetts, why Adams mattered, Hutchinson cited his “great pretended zeal for liberty, and a most inflexible natural temper. He was the first that publickly asserted the Independency of the colonies upon the Kingdom.”

Adams did more than that, as the king would soon learn. After exploiting the Boston Massacre for its propagandistic possibilities, Adams played a still-controversial role in the Boston Tea Party, helped organize the Sons of Liberty and the Committees of Correspondence, and served in the Continental Congress. There, Stoll writes, Adams “was further down the road to independence at this juncture than many others who later became known as founding fathers.”

Ben Franklin was in London, drafting a plan for a reconciliation requiring Massachusetts to pay for the tea in Boston Harbor. George Washington was arguing that “no such thing [as independence is] desired by any thinking man in all North America,” and Thomas Jefferson wanted an independent legislature for Americans, who would remain subjects of George III. In time, these and other founders came to agree with Adams. Some of them—the hard-drinking, theologically indifferent Anglicans of Virginia chief among them—had their own, often distinct and sometimes less high-minded reasons for supporting a break with the mother country, but Adams’s reasons were clear from the start. They were also clearly stated, and Stoll does not for one moment lose sight of his subject’s motives or allow the reader to do so.

“We are the descendants of ancestors remarkeable [sic] for their zeal for true religion & liberty,” Adams wrote five years before the Boston Massacre. “When they found it was no longer possible for them to bear any part in the support of this glorious cause in their native country England, they transplanted themselves at their very own great expense, into the wilds of America, till that time inhabited only by savage beasts and men: Here they resolved to set up the worship of God, according to their best judgment, upon the plan of the new testament, to maintain it among themselves, and transmit it to their posterity, & to spread the knowledge of

Mr. Crawford is the author of Twilight at Monticello: The Final Years of Thomas Jefferson.

Jesus Christ among the ignorant & barbarous natives."

To Adams, Americans were no less than Hebrew slaves of Pharaoh. Religious references appear "in nearly every document touched by Adams's quill," Stoll writes, and they appear in nearly every page of this meticulously documented study. This is helpful to the reader's understanding, but not always in ways the author might wish.

"If Adams was so instrumental in achieving American independence and so influential even afterward," Stoll asks, "why then has his fame faded so badly with time?" Try this: However effective Adams might have been, his was not an especially attractive personality, then or now. He was something of a prig and a nag. He had hoped Boston would become "the Christian Sparta." He favored the suppression of "theatrical entertainments, horse racing, gaming, and other such diversions as are productive of idleness, dissipation, and a general depravity of principles and manners." He wanted to stamp out "prophane [*sic*] swearing in our Army." (Good luck.)

Infused with missionary zeal, Samuel Adams was an absolutist—except when it suited his purposes to be otherwise. In such cases, he was, as Ira Stoll puts it, 'flexible.'

Infused with missionary zeal, Adams was also, as might be expected, an absolutist—except when it suited his purposes to be otherwise. In such cases, he was, as Stoll puts it, "flexible," and it is not difficult to understand why Adams's Tory contemporaries believed, as one critic wrote in 1781, that he concealed his schemes behind a "religious mask."

An enthusiastic campaigner against Roman Catholicism (which leads "to the worst anarchy and confusion, civil discord, war and blood shed" [*sic*]), he incited the Mohawks to "whet your hatchet" against the British for having "made a law to establish the religion of the Pope in Canada, which lies so near you." At the Constitutional Convention, Adams favored requiring officeholders to "denounce any principle (whether it be Roman Catholic, Mahometan, Deistical, or Infidel)" that might subvert the "religious rights" established by the Constitution. He distrusted the pacifist Quakers, whom he called "a sly artful People." He feared the establishment of the Church of England on these shores, which made him surely the last American of discernment to find anything remotely threatening in the presence of an Anglican bishop.

Even so, Adams was perfectly willing, when seeking the support of the French, to recognize their Catholic monarch as "his most Christian majesty." At the Continental Congress, when disagreements arose over the denomination of clergymen to open sessions in prayer, Adams claimed he was "no Bigot, and could hear a Prayer from a Gentleman of Piety and Virtue, who was at the same Time a Friend to his Country": He could sup, in short, with any Christian "excepting those amongst them who Espouse the cause of our Enemies."

Politics, for Adams, always trumped religion. Adams would not be the last of his countrymen for whom this would be the case. Americans have often confused the two and sought to make one an instrument of the other. Political leaders are expected to use secular means to achieve spiritual ends, with dubious consequences. This expectation was inevitable for Adams and his contemporaries, who believed, in Stoll's words, "they were on a God-given mission to advance freedom."

Many Americans persist in this belief, and Stoll does a thorough job exploring the extent to which this conviction motivated one remarkable figure who was, as John Adams put it, "zealous, ardent and keen in the Cause." Stoll also makes plain, to anyone troubled today by claims that ours is a "Christian nation," that this was how we began, no matter what we might be now. **NR**

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Film

Uprisings

ROSS DOUTHAT

STORY matters. By rights, this winter's anti-Nazi double feature, *Valkyrie* and *Defiance*—in which the Wehrmacht's officer class and Belarus's Jews, respectively, take up arms against Hitler's Germany—ought to be a two-engine train wreck. The former film stars an eyepatched Tom Cruise as the German aristocrat Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg, a piece of miscasting disastrous enough to sink most movies by itself. The latter is yet another earnest humanist epic from Edward Zwick, a director whose recent curriculum vitae includes the lousy historical epic *The Last Samurai* and the yet-lousier modern epic *Blood Diamond*. Both movies' scripts are thudding and obvious; both are war stories from a war that's already launched more films than Hitler's Germany had panzers. In *Valkyrie*, you know how the movie's going to end; by the midpoint of *Defiance*, you can more or less predict it.

But story matters. Even if it's hard to watch Tom Cruise impersonate a Bavarian nobleman without giggling, or to avoid rolling your eyes when Zwick smacks you upside the head with yet another pious speech or dose of heavy-handed symbolism, the on-screen events in both cases are too riveting to be ruined by miscasting and melodrama. You won't leave *Valkyrie* convinced that its star was the right choice to play the man who nearly assassinated Hitler, or *Defiance* convinced that its director has risen above the high-minded hackery that's defined most of his career. But the stories they're telling are flat-out fascinating enough that you won't be sorry to have seen them try.

It helps that neither movie sprawls too far beyond the boundaries of its narrative. Both largely eschew backstory, dropping us into a key inflection point without benefit of setup. In *Valkyrie*, the year is 1943, and Cruise's Stauffenberg, shorn of an eye and a hand in North Africa, is being recruited into a preexisting military conspiracy against the Führer, headed by Generals Olbricht (Bill Nighy), von Tresckow (Kenneth Branagh), and Beck (Terence Stamp). In *Defiance*, it's 1941, they're rounding up Jews in Nazi-occupied Soviet territory, and the tough, forest-savvy Bielski brothers—Daniel Craig's Tuvia, Liev Schreiber's Zus, and Jamie Bell's Asael—decide to take to the woods instead of being herded into ghettos. Extraneous entanglements are kept to a minimum: Stauffenberg has a family, but his wife (Carice van Houten) hovers mutely in the background while the business of the film moves forward. The two older Bielski brothers have wives in the city, but they're both dead, offstage, within the movie's first 20 minutes. For the most part, then, there's only the anti-Hitler plot, and the Jews in the forest.

Defiance's Tuvia (Daniel Craig) and Valkyrie's Stauffenberg (Tom Cruise)

CRAIG: PARAMOUNT CRUISE: UNITED ARTISTS

The subject of *Valkyrie* is the mechanics of tyrannicide: not only how to kill an evil king, but how to overthrow his government once he's dead. The subject of *Defiance* is the mechanics of survival: More Jews enter the woods, first in a trickle and then in a flood, and the Bielski brothers become unlikely leaders for an entire community of refugees. Throughout both films, the older generation falters and fails—the dithering generals, principled enough to plot against Hitler but not brave enough to follow through; the leaders of the Jewish ghetto, fearful of fleeing to the forest, clinging to the hope that they're worth more to the Nazis alive than dead—while the younger generation steps forward and *acts*. In one case, you know they'll pull it off (like Oskar Schindler, the whole fascination of the Bielskis comes from their unparalleled success); the only question is how. In the other case, you know they'll come close but ultimately fail; the only question is how close.

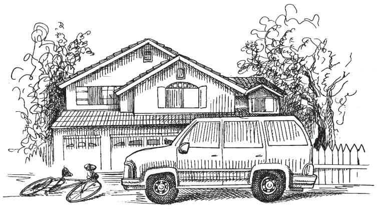
Both stories seem like myths or parables, too remarkable and resonant to be real. Yet both derive their power—allowing for compression and creative license—from being absolutely true. Especially in the coincidence-laden *Valkyrie*, if you find yourself thinking, of a given event, *that can't possibly have happened*, chances are it did.

The dynamics are primal, even Biblical: brotherly rivalry in *Defiance*—the eldest Bielski, Craig's Tuvia, wants to run and hide and keep as many innocents as he can alive; Schreiber's Zus wants to stand and fight—and, in *Valkyrie*, the implicit patricide involved in slaying the dark father of the Nazi Reich. (The film's epigraph is the oath of allegiance, sworn before almighty God and unto death, that every German soldier took to Hitler.) And both stories play out against Eastern Europe's great primeval forest—a fairy-tale landscape, at once gorgeous and sinister, a place of refuge and of danger all at once. In *Defiance*, it's a blue-tinted Eden where the Fall could be reenacted at any moment; in *Valkyrie*, it's a forest perilous, with Stauffenberg as the knight-errant, bomb in hand, trying to penetrate the tyrant's lair.

It's possible to watch these films with a sense of regret for what they could have been: The stories carry all before them, but there's a deeper, stronger movie to be made from the material in each case. Yet it's better to watch them, I think, with gratitude that *somebody* decided these stories were worth telling, and better that the wrong people were involved than that the films were never made at all. **NR**

The Straggler

Chance of A Ghost



JOHN DERBYSHIRE

I was somewhat surprised recently to be told by a friend that she had had a "reading" done. I didn't grasp her meaning immediately. The Church of Scientology came first to mind. Don't they have some ritual (sacrament?) of wiring you up to a device that locates Bad Thoughts? Then, getting more up to date, and having just read Steven Pinker's *New York Times* piece on the topic, I wondered if she had been to one of those services that sequence your genome for you.

It was neither. My speculations had been *too* up to date. My friend had, she told me, been to a "psychic counselor."

"You mean . . . a fortune-teller?" I asked, honestly seeking clarification.

This was apparently a *faux pas*. "I knew you'd make fun of it," she sniffed. "Should never have told you."

She thereafter refused to divulge any details of the "reading." Had I been more tactful, I might have learned the precise technique she'd submitted to. Crystal ball? Tarot cards? Palmistry? In China they read the moles and blemishes on your skin.

I feel pretty sure, at least, that my friend's early-21st-century "psychic counselor" was more presentable than the famous one Captain Gronow attended in Paris circa 1820:

> It was impossible for imagination to conceive a more hideous being. She looked like a monstrous toad, bloated and venomous. She had one wall-eye, but the other was a piercer. She wore a fur cap upon her head, from beneath which she glared out upon her horrified visitors. The walls of the room were covered with huge bats, nailed by their wings to the ceiling, stuffed owls, cabalistic signs, skeletons . . .

The worldly Captain Gronow—he fought at Waterloo, served as a member of Parliament, enjoyed the *Vanity Fair* high life of Regency London and Restoration Paris, and wrote a book of engaging "reminiscences and recollections"—tells us that he did not at the time believe one word of the sibyl's predictions (she used cards), but that they all came true nonetheless.

This area—the occult—is one that is remote from my interests and temperament. Having an empirical cast of mind, and a mathematical education, I take a dim view of the whole business. Should I ever feel the need to engage with the Supernatural, I shall return to my church, which at least attempts to supply some intellectual underpinnings to the powers of the air. I'll leave the crystal balls, Ouija boards, and séances to those who are that way inclined.

I'm a bit surprised to find it still going on in this prosaic age. I thought popular occultism had faded away across the latter half of the 20th century. Certainly such things were much more commonly spoken of in my childhood.

Ghosts, especially so. In the England of 50 or 60 years ago, everybody had a ghost story, every town at least one haunted house. Half a mile from my own home was an old manor, built on the site of a medieval abbey. The place had been bought up by the county and opened to the public. One of the garden walks was haunted. Children would step off the path to let a nun go by; but no adult could see the nun.

I'll admit I never saw the ghostly nun myself, though I wanted to. Perhaps that empirical mindset got in the way even then. I recall wondering how, if ghosts could pass through walls, they could walk on the ground. If solid matter was insubstantial to them, why didn't they drop through to the center of the earth; or, if they were immune to gravity, why didn't they float up into the stratosphere? We never reason as well as we do aged eight or nine.

I think people in the mid-20th century believed in ghosts, or at least were *interested* in them, much more commonly than nowadays. I was fed a regular diet of ghost stories as soon as I could read, some of them considered classics that every well-read person ought to be acquainted with: M. R. James's "The Mezzotint," W. W. Jacobs's "The Monkey's Paw," Hugh Walpole's "The Tarn," and many others. Walter de la Mare's wonderfully spooky poem "The Listeners" was a great favorite, known to everyone:

> But only a host of phantom listeners
> That dwelt in the lone house then
> Stood listening in the quiet of the
>   moonlight
> To that voice from the world of men . . .

Dennis Wheatley's occult thrillers were selling a million copies a year, there were up-market occult movies—Mervyn Johns (father of Glynis) in *Dead of Night* lingers in the mind; TV's hit series *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* often featured occult themes; and even a hit Broadway musical, *Carousel*, had a ghost as protagonist. (Though the century's best ghost story, Flann O'Brien's *The Third Policeman*, wasn't published till 1967.)

As the old gothic strain of literature had given birth to science fiction earlier in the century, so, at around the same time, had classic occultism brought forth Extra-Sensory Perception. Dr. J. B. Rhine had been busy trying to demonstrate telepathy and psychokinesis in his lab at Duke University since 1931, and busy also trying to fend off old-school occultists who wanted him to help them speak to the dead. In the 1950s Rhine's researches got the attention of the U.S. military. Various ESP projects were launched, culminating in a psychic espionage unit named Stargate, whose congressional funding ended only in 1995. The Soviets, too, were researching ESP for military purposes. (They called telepathy "biological radio.")

We have, as I said, since drifted into a more prosaic age. We get a decent ghost movie now and then—M. R. James would have loved *The Sixth Sense*—but for the most part, interest in the occult has faded. TV lawyer shows have reared a whole generation of show-me-the-evidence empiricists; cheap camcorders and cell phones have made fakery much harder—the Amityville Horror would never fly nowadays; and cognitive-science popularizers like Pinker have sapped away at the Ghost in the Machine.

It's a duller, flatter world. No, I won't be going for a "reading" anytime soon, but it's oddly comforting to know one still can. **NR**

Happy Warrior

BY MARK STEYN

Smooth Cloying Goo

Is it safe to come out yet? I ducked under the covers for most of the week, but on Coronation Morn there was a knock on the door and I discovered Aunt Zeituni's deportation order had been reassigned to me. Fortunately, it was accompanied by a complimentary pint of Ben & Jerry's special commemorative "Yes, Pecan!" ice cream—a smooth cloying goo concealing a remarkable number of nuts, which seems as appropriate a way as any of marking the incoming administration.

Seeking refuge from the prostrations of the U.S. media, I turned to the foreign press, only to find that Canada's *Globe and Mail* (which is like the *New York Times* but without the jokes) was contrasting the incoming president with, er, me. "He belongs to a demographic—it made his win possible—that doesn't even get the problem with a black, a woman or a gay president," wrote Rick Salutin. "They don't clutch old identifications with race or 'the West.' They glory in 'hybridity' and 'mongrelization'—as Barack Obama did when he called himself a 'mutt' like the shelter dog he'd prefer for his kids. For another demographic, this shift induces panic. They worry about 'shrivelled birth rates' in the United States and its 'enervated allies' (Mark Steyn); they mourn the decline of 'the last serious Western nation.'"

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Crumbs. I wasn't aware I was an entirely different "demographic" from Barack Obama: We're more or less the same generation, but evidently the president stands for hope and the future and I represent the past and fear. Despite Mr. Salutin's best efforts, I'm not sure I'm a plausible poster child for Anglo-Saxon racial purity—I'm a Russo-Belgian-Canadian with no very reliable grip on my family tree before the late 19th century. And, when you think about it, President Obama isn't that much of a "mutt," either: He's an Ivy Leaguer, just like his predecessor. He was born the son of a British subject, just like all the presidents of this republic before Martin Van Buren. His stepmother flew in for the inauguration from London, the original rulers of these colonies; his grandmother flew in from Kenya, another former colony. Genealogists have not only traced young Barack's ancestry back to William the Lion, King of Scotland from 1165 to 1214, but determined that he is a cousin of an even more ferocious medieval tyrant, Dick Cheney.

In other words, underneath the change, there's an awful lot of continuity. Of course, Rick Salutin is correct: The demographic that is the change it's been waiting for doesn't want to be seen "clutching old identifications." The "Obama pledge" that Ashton Kutcher devised for a bunch of Z-list celebs to drone in unison starts with the words: "I pledge to be a servant to our president and to all mankind"—nothing so parochial as America in there. After the inauguration, my old pal Boris Johnson, mayor of London, posted a Twitter (if that's the right expression) saying, "What a speech!! Speaking as citizen of the world that was exac what I wanted to hear from an Amer Pres't."

What that seems to boil down to is an Amer Pres't who isn't hung up on being Pres't of Amer: "People of the world," he addressed the audience for his famous Berlin speech, sounding as if his spacecraft had just landed from Planet Hopechangula and you earthlings had no choice but to submit to his awesome power. In postmodern terms, he's not as far gone as Michael Ignatieff, leader of the Liberal party up in Ottawa, who returned to the country after spending most of his adult life abroad and announced in the intro to his book on Canada that writing it had "deepened my attachment to the place on earth that, if I needed one, I would call home." Gee, thanks.

President Obama also has the air of a man who doesn't really need a home. His is a very appealing "hybridity," much of it consciously adopted. In the old days, immigrants landed at Ellis Island as "Barack Obama" and set off looking for work as "Barry O. Bammerson" or some such. The new president made the opposite journey, from Barry the schoolboy to Barack the community organizer. Again, I'm reminded of Britannic precedents: There was a chap called Harry Lee, Cambridge graduate, respected barrister, and, in the words of one British cabinet minister, "the best bloody Englishman east of Suez." Sniffing opportunity in the Malay states, he learned Mandarin, embraced Confucianism, and reinvented himself as Lee Kuan Yew, father of Singapore. For both men, their inheritance was a default setting, and the exotic "hybridity" was a kind of customized extra.

But what happens when there's no default setting? Rick Salutin is certainly right that the young Obamatrons do not identify with "the West." On the other hand, they seem unaware that the multicultural frisson they get such a kick out of is a unicultural phenomenon. To discard "the West" with nary a thought is to reject not race but the civilization that built the modern world, and the even smaller group of countries within it that have demonstrated any sustained tradition of liberty. Like Ignatieff, Lee, and Gandhi, Obama is a product of that relatively narrow tradition, whether his squealing Obammysoxers know it or not.

Mr. Salutin is insouciant about a planet in which "Western civilization" is an archaism. Lee Kuan Yew thinks we are merely restoring the Euro-Asian balance of power as it existed before the rise of the European empires. And gloomier fellows like yours truly think that in the twilight of the West all kinds of malevolent forces will arise. Asked what he thought of "Western civilization," Gandhi supposedly replied it would be a good idea. Ha ha. Wonder if it'll sound as funny a few decades hence. **NR**

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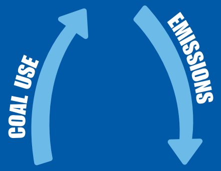

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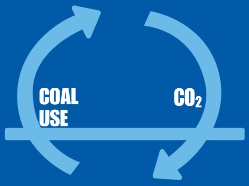

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